

THE WORDS OF Truth

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)*

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RESTORATION

Philip Davis

Restoration. The very word makes one think of setting things straight or making them whole. Restoration of an antique piece of furniture or a classic car involves making it the way it was meant to be.

Restoration is a vision shared by many religious people. One is trying to return as nearly as possible to the original intent of the designer. An equally valid approach to furniture and automobile design is to create a "new and improved" answer to the same functional or esthetic demand. In spiritual matters many people are tempted to take the same approach. They do not believe that the original design was the "end-all" to the question of how we are to worship God. Denying that it is answered once and for all in the New Testament (as "interpreted for the first century") some try to adapt and retrofit the faith of our Lord for a new era.

The Lord would have us to conform culture to revelation rather than bending the Bible to society's departures and demands. These people wrongly refer to the process as an inevitable healthy re-interpretation of the ageless message.

The contrast between man-made design and heavenly commands make the difference in the proper approach to the problem. What Inspiration truly means is the real concern. The New Testament was written with a "built-in" anticipation of the needs of all centuries and cultures, both advanced and primitive. It always applies. It needs no change other than those incidental ones concerning such matters as method and media.

A modernistic skeptic masquerading as a professor of Philosophy of Religion at a major state university spoke for many people when he stated that "restoration is not only impossible, it is not even desirable." According to whom?! The Bible praises and demands restoration of "the ancient landmarks." John the Immerser's message was at its essence, one of restoration to the unfaithful and worldly Jews of his day.

Restoration distills the spirit of the prophets and judges of the Old Testament. It is the solution to the errors of Cain, Nadab and Abihu, and King Saul. It is the correction of the excesses and wickedness of Phineas and Hophni, sons of Eli. Restorationism was not the "legalistic downfall" of the Pharisees but rather the defeat of agnostic Saducee-ism. (Pharisees' main

problems were not over-attention to detail and precision but included (1) hypocritical selectivity about which of God's commands to follow precisely and (2) following law for its own sake rather than looking to the improvement of the human spirit in God's revealed way.)

Restoration honors the intention of God. It declares ultimate trust in the divinely inspired word. It is form and substance, letter and spirit, grace, law and love combined in exact balance. It respects revelation and overthrows the "sanctified unbelief" of those who pretend to follow God while refusing to conform and submit to His Sovereignty, claiming that grace abolishes law.

Restoration still pleads, "let us speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent." It still quotes, "if any man speak let him speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11). It still honors the principle, "whatsoever you do in word or deed do all in the name of the Lord" (Colossians 3:17). And well it should!

When one forgets who is "in charge" and, in substance, wishes to claim Jesus as Savior without submitting to Him as Lord, he has fallen into the trap of Satan (Jude 1:6ff). He has taken on himself the mastery of his own soul without the wisdom to accomplish the task.

Restoration can also refer to the setting right of individual lives gone away from the approving presence of the Lord of Glory. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1). When we restore such a one we are not striving to improve upon God's design of a justified imperfect human. Rather we are trying to make him whole as though he had not sinned. He is once again as the Lord wants (James 5:19f). When applied to the church, restoration refers to setting the body back into a reconciled and saved relationship.

So whether we are trying to restore souls or to promote the practice of New Testament Christianity in the twentieth century, the essence is the same. The goal is making things to be as God intends. And that intent never varies.

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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Three Ingredients For Controlling Stress, Part I

Probably the majority of Christians would admit to living a stressful life. As we travel on the freeway of 90's living we may feel compelled to keep the popular pace or be left behind.

Perhaps more than any time in history Christians miss many blessings offered in Christ, simply due to their failure to take advantage of these blessings. One example of this concerns stress reduction.

It should be obvious to Bible students that Jesus relieves the stress brought on by sin. He does so by teaching us the right way to live, that we should repent from sin, and then offers us redemption and forgiveness. But what about those stresses not tied to daily living?

In Philippians four, Paul gives Christians three very specific instructions to live by, and to control that awful stress. He concludes his instructions by writing, "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." All 90's Christians should read and practice this amazing prescription from the Great Physician, Christ (Philippians 4:4-7).

First, "Rejoice in the Lord always" (vs.4). Paul used the "rejoice" thought in every chapter of Philippians "1:18, 2:17, 3:1, 4:4". We rejoice in the character, the law, the government, the

grace, and the promises of our Lord. We rejoice in the person of Jesus. We rejoice in our Lord always; that is, under all conditions. We may wonder, "but can I rejoice in Him in the hard times -- times of financial reversals, of child-rearing problems, of prolonged sickness, of the heart-rending loss of loved ones?" Yes! Always! One does not have to be laughing to rejoice in the Lord. Sometimes we rejoice in Him through tears of sadness. The key is that we don't rejoice in Him because of these hard times, we rather rejoice in spite of these hard times. Our world changes about us often. Jesus never changes (Hebrews 13:8).

People who find their greatest joy in possessions are going to find it difficult to be content when those possessions, for whatever reason, vanish. The first essential to healthy Christian contentment is learning how to rejoice in the Lord (Colossians 3:1,2).

Why shouldn't the Christian be a contented person? If everything else changes, the Lord does not change. Spend time today and every day studying the word of our Lord, and pondering His teachings. Then enjoy, even in the hard days, the fact that we can rejoice in the Lord.

MOST OF A MINUTE - CHRISTIANS OBEY THE LAW

Ever thought about living in an America without laws? Sound nice? Well, if it does, it wouldn't for long. It is fascinating to me that anti-government activists like Timothy McVeigh, convicted in the Oklahoma City bombing, who want to be free from the laws of government, are so eager to take advantage of our government's court system now to save his life!

Romans 13 of the Bible talks about government; its right to tax citizens, its obligation to protect citizens, and other matters. It teaches that God approves the right of government to

exist, and tells us to live as good citizens under the government. Verse 5 says we ought to obey the laws of the land for two reasons: First, because we fear the punishment of the government in jail or fines, and secondly, because we are Christians, and we have a conscience which hurts us when we violate God's will.

It is right to be good citizens.

AFTER HEARING, WHAT?

John Gipson • Little Rock, Arkansas

Hearing the gospel is essential, for the gospel is the power which God uses for salvation to everyone who has faith (Romans 1:16). Paul stresses that “every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.” But then he asks some questions: “But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?” (Romans 10:13,14).

It's obvious that you can't have salvation without the preaching of the gospel. That's where the whole matter begins.

But what about those who hear the gospel? Do they just believe the message and nothing more? That's not what I read in my New Testament.

Those in Jerusalem heard a sermon about how Jesus had been made both Lord and Christ. “So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls” (Acts 8:12).

It's the same story with Simon who had practiced magic. “Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip” (Acts 8:13).

Follow the road which leads down from Jerusalem to Gaza. There you will find Philip telling the good news of Jesus to an Ethiopian. “And as they went along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water! What is to prevent my being baptized?’” (Acts 8:36). Nothing, if he had faith. So Philip baptized him.

At Philippi a woman by the name of Lydia gave “heed to what was said by Paul.” And you know what? She, too, was baptized (Acts 16:14-15).

What comes after hearing the gospel? Baptism! Didn't Jesus say, “He who believes and is baptized will be save; but he who does not believe will be condemned”? (Mark 16:16).

HUMBLE

Via East Pointe Church of Christ • 3935 Woodland Forrest Drive • Tuscaloosa, AL 35405

Lord give me such a humble heart that I may not forget
The dreadful price Christ paid for me, and that He loves me yet.

Lord give me such a humble spirit that I won't be self-willed
And let thy words forever be within my heart instilled

Lord give me loving humble eyes that I may ever see
Each little foot, or hand, or eye that turns to follow me.

Lord give me such a humble mouth that every word I say
May light the path of some poor soul along life's rugged way

Lord give me such a humble mind that thoughts which come to me
Will point the way from death to life that I may dwell with Thee.

Lord give me caring humble words with which to win a soul
And may the harvest multiply each step toward heaven's goal

Lord give me humble gratitude for blessings here on earth
But let me love eternal things and realize their worth.

Lord give me humble feelings toward the things I've said and done
And let me grow more humble still toward setting of life's sun

Lord give me what I need to live, and when it's time to die
With precious loved ones standing near with tears in every eye.

I pray that they who mourn can say Earth lost a faithful friend
But God and Heaven now can boast another truly humble man

I LOVE TO TELL THE STORY

Edwin S. Jones

In the world of the early church there were not many Christians from the upper levels of society (1 Cor. 1:26-27). Christianity, while embracing all men and having representatives from all elements of society, was primarily made up of very common people.

Those who comprised the first century church were generally strangers to formal education. They often came from pagan backgrounds that were about as far removed from true thinking as men and women could be. They faced cultures and societal structures that openly opposed them and even killed them. In some circles they were regarded as the scum of the earth.

But they loved to tell the story of Jesus. They could not keep the good news to themselves. Even being scattered by persecutions only caused the church to grow because they spoke to Jesus wherever they went (Acts 8:4).

They didn't have a political voice. They often lived and died within a very small geographical area with little exposure to new things. Their time was dominated by work days of from 12-14 hours with no modern machinery. Their households had none of the "modern conveniences." In fact, running water was virtually unknown. Everything seemed to make their success impossible.

But they turned the world upside down. They challenged the intellectual giants of the day and won. They gave no thought to their limitations because they loved to tell of Jesus.

And what a story they had! God's power unto salvation was revealed in the message of the risen Savior. Nothing in the mighty cultures that opposed

them could compete with what we now see as the old, old story. The message drove them. It empowered them to rise above their humble estate to become more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37).

Their communication systems were crude and their travel was slow at best. Many of them were bond slaves and most of them had little or no financial reserves. They were not polished speakers or gifted orators. They most often spoke a dialect derisively called "common" by the cultured class.

But their simple eloquence overpowered the studied presentations of great men. They had been given a message that mere men could never surpass. They had the Word of God about the Word who became flesh. They could not be stopped. They loved to tell the story.

We, conversely, have an educated Christianity. We have standing in our communities. We can travel the world in hours and talk to anyone anywhere in seconds. We have respectability. What we think is opposition will not hold a candle to the lions of the arena. We are greatly blessed.

But do we love to tell the story? Do we sense the power of the message preached? Do we take no thought of excuses or do we manufacture them in ways that would cause our first century brethren to wonder about our faith? Will God have to bring persecution to the church for the love of telling the story to return?

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THE WORDS OF Truth

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GOD'S UNIVERSITY

Allen Webster

God is interested in education. His own Son was a teacher (Jn. 3:2; Mk. 6:34) and His children are students (Mt. 11:29). The pathway to greatness, in His estimation, is to be a teacher. "...whosoever shall do and teach them [His commands], the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 5:19). Christ's apostles were teachers (Acts 5:28,42), the early church taught (Acts 16:21), elders are to be "apt to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2), preachers are teachers (1 Tim. 1:3; 4:11; 6:2, and older women are to teach younger women (Tim.2:4). All Christians today are to teach (Mt. 28:19, matheteuo, "to enroll as a scholar, be a disciple, instruct") all nations and we are even commanded to teach others to teach (2 Tim. 2:2) - a sort of school of education! Thus, God's church is a university.

GOD'S UNIVERSITY...EXISTS FOR THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION. Colleges have athletic programs, sponsor research facilities, provide housing and food, develop leadership skills through student government and clubs, and stimulate economic growth in the community, but none of these provide the reason for keeping the doors open. These institutions exist for the purpose of providing education. The church may feed the hungry, clothe the naked, develop friendships, promote fellowship, provide daycare, and a million other good works, but these do not justify its existence. The church's purpose is to save souls by teaching the Word. Jesus came "...to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk. 19:10) which He did by going "to teach and to preach in their cities" (Mt. 11:1). Let's not lose sight of this and end up giving a second-rate education to souls that need "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27).

...TESTS YOUR PROGRESS AS A STUDENT. Students don't enjoy taking them, and teachers don't enjoy grading them, but schools must administer periodic examinations to ensure that students are mastering the material. They do not wait until graduation week to see if they have learned enough for the diploma. God tests those in His university, too. Peter explains that He puts our faith through a "trial" (*dokimion*, "a test")(1 Pet 1:7). Some of His tests are difficult--Peter called one a "fiery trial" (*puros*, "a figure drawn from a refiner's fire, the burning by which metals are reduced; calamities that test one's character") (1 Pet. 4:12; cf. 1 Cor. 3:13). "The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the LORD trieth the hearts" (Prov. 17:3). God tested Abraham (Gen. 22:1), and He will test you--every Christian faces tests; none are exempt (2 Tim. 3:12). God's examinations are never impossible (1 Cor. 10:13), if we

will study and apply (2 Tim. 2:15; Jas. 1:25).

...HELPS YOU PURSUE YOUR LIFE'S GOAL. College is not the goal, but the means to reach it. Students take classes toward degrees to prepare them to enter fields of service or employment. Nobody enters college thinking they have arrived, only that they are progressing. The church, likewise, helps men pursue life's goal. That goal is to reach heaven. Paul enrolled in God's university and realized it was but a means to an end. He said, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after...I count not myself to have apprehended: but...I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus...For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 3:12-14; 1:21).

...RELIES ON RECRUITMENT. Thriving universities are *recruiting* universities. They buy radio time, put up billboards, send out truckloads of mail, sponsor career days at high schools, and host visitors with the proverbial red carpet treatment. Why? They *need* students. God's university must recruit. We don't usually call it that--in biblical terms it's "spread the Gospel" or "evangelize"--but the idea is the same. We cannot expect to erect a building, put up a sign, and open our doors to a steady stream of excited visitors. We must go out and find them. "And the lord said to the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled...repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Lk. 14:23; 24:47). "Then said Jesus to them...as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" (Jn. 20:21). We must tell them what God's university offers (Eph. 1:3). Recruit! Recruit!

...IS TRAINING TOMORROW'S LEADERS. Tomorrow's presidents, congressmen, doctors, teachers, and scientists are in today's classes. They are receiving the foundation of knowledge and learning skills which will provide the framework for future successes. Just so, tomorrow's church leaders are in today's Bible classes. That little fellow who can't seem to pay attention will then be in the pulpit struggling to hold other people's attention (2 Tim. 4:2). That little girl who just wants to talk will be quieting other little girls as she teaches this lesson to children yet unborn (2 Tim. 3:15). How seriously would a professor take his political science class if he knew that a future congressman was a freshman student? How seriously must the church take its Bible school realizing that future preachers, elders, missionaries, deacons, and Bible teachers are listening? Souls unreached

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FROM THE EDITOR

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Three Ingredients For Controlling Stress, Part 2

The text for this little series is Philippians 4:4-7. In this passage Paul offers Christians a priceless commodity, worth more than rubies and gold: "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Only a fool would choose material possessions over the peace of God. Last week we considered the first of three instructions from this text, "Rejoice in the Lord always." The second instruction is, "Let your moderation be known unto all men" (Philippians 4:5).

The Greek word for "moderation," according to Thayer, means, "what's reasonable; equitable, fair, mild, gentle." It is no surprise then that in I Timothy 3:3 the word is translated "Patient." In Titus 3:2 and in James 3:17 it is translated "gentle," and in II Corinthians 10:1 it is translated "gentleness."

Do I work to live a balanced life, seeking to be equitable, fair, mild, and gentle to those about me? This word conveys the picture of one who is easily approached and consistent, one whose heart is of kindness and goodness. Paul says that it should be "known unto all men." The relevance to stress reduction rings clear and practical. When I treat all people around me

with Christian integrity and gentleness, I can sleep at night. The natural by-product of this characteristic is calmness. However, when I walk the tight-rope of shady deals, questionable business transactions, and the speaking of sharp prideful words, I'm asking for compounded stress. Where is the peace found in that life?

Philippians 2:2-4 says, "Fulfill ye my joy, and ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."

Colossians 3:12, 13 says, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

Rejoice in the Lord always. Let your moderation be known unto all men. Next week we will consider the third ingredient for stress reduction: "Be careful for nothing."

MOST OF A MINUTE - ANGELS FOOD

Do you know what angels eat? No, this isn't a joke, I'm being serious. (Psalm 78:24,25) "And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. Man did not eat angel's food: he sent them meat to the full."

Perhaps the meaning is that angels saw to it that the manna was distributed to God's people. Now, think about this; Matthew 5:44 says that God sends rain on all people--those who love Him, and those who don't. That rain is similar to that manna. We don't earn it, we

don't buy it, we can't make it come or stop. It is strictly a blessing of God.

In Numbers 21 of the Old Testament, the people drew God's wrath when they complained about the manna.

And you know, I've made a decision to never, ever complain about the rain.

now may never be (Ecc. 12:1; Mt. 16:26).

...PROMOTES YOU WHEN YOU COMPLETE THE COURSE.

There comes a day when students don a mortarboard and tassel to march triumphantly across a stage. Their name is called, a diploma is awarded, and they are promoted to future success. This happens in God's university, though it takes a lifetime to reach that point. To borrow a phrase from Paul, "...I have

finished my course...Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:7,8). This graduation march ends in heaven.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations..." (Mt. 28:19).

THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER

W. A. Holley

"Suffer hardships with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life; that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier" (II Timothy 2:3-4, ASV).

The Lord's army is a special group of people who have been incorporated into it through obedience to the gospel of Christ (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:36-47). These soldiers are all volunteers; there are no soldiers who are forced to join the Lord's army!!

The Christian has a Great Captain who commands them in all they are required to do. "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:9-10, KJV).

Thus, when Jesus died upon the cross, He died for all who had ever been born, for all then living, and for all who should ever be born, even to the end of the world. Hence, the doctrine of hereditary total depravity is false.

All armies have written manuals of official codes of conduct which govern them. Any violation of the rules is punished. The Christian is governed by the Holy Bible--the Word of God (II Timothy 3:16-17; John 12:48; Revelation 20:12-15).

All Christian soldiers are commanded to obey their Commander in Chief, the Captain of their salvation--Jesus Christ (Hebrews 2:9-10). From this law there can be no appeal. His law stands forever.

For example the United States Army has special terms of enlistment. The Christian soldier, in order to become a part of the Lord's Army, must meet its terms of enlistment, viz, Faith, Repentance, Confession of Christ, and Baptism in water (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 8:32-39; Romans 6:3-4).

Now the Christian soldier can worship and serve God in all things that are required of him (John 4:24; Acts 2:36-47). Silence forbids any acts of worship or service which the Lord God has not commanded. For example, Nadab and Abihu lost their lives because they presumed to offer "strange fire before the Lord, which he commanded them not" (Leviticus 10:1 ff).

The enlistment of the Christian soldier is for the duration of one's life--from the day one becomes a Christian until he dies. There are no furloughs--a leave of absence from duty. The Lord Jesus Christ does not tolerate those members who are AWOL*--absent without leave. Let's stop and think--how many soldiers in the Lord's army, are AWOL in this area? Are you one of them? If so, repent and come back to duty.

We now turn to Paul's remarks with reference to the armor required to be worn by the Christian Soldier. Paul's allusion is to

the armor worn by the Roman soldiers. He knew them well because, on occasion, he was chained to some of them (Acts 28:20; II Timothy 1:20).

We have reference to Ephesians 6:10-18. We sincerely suggest that you find these verses in your Bible and read them. We shall take excerpts from these verses and draw some needed lessons which apply directly to the Christian Soldier.

"Put on the whole armor of God." Not just a part, but the "whole armor of God." God furnishes armor for His soldiers. It is both defensive and offensive. One does the work of a soldier by keeping the commandments of God.

"That ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil," (Verse 11). The Christian soldier is not fighting a physical battle, but a spiritual one. The wiles of the devil refer to his trickery.

"For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against powers, against the world-rulers, of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places. The analogy, verse 12, (ASV), has reference to the world of evil spirits.

As proof, we quote: "God spared not angels when they sinned, but cast them down to hell, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (II Peter 2:4).

Furthermore, "Angels that kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, he hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6). Hence, the devil and his servants are alive and working against God's people unto this day (I Peter 5:8; John 8:44; James 4:7). The devil can be defeated (Matthew 4:1-11).

"Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth." Girding one's loins with a belt gives added strength. Truth will give any soldier of Christ strength indeed, for truth will stand when the world is on fire (Matthew 24:34-36).

"Wherefore take up the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day. (V.13). Hence, if we do our part, God will work in us so as to bring victory (Philippians 2:12-13).

"...And having done all to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness." We must stand, wearing the breastplate of righteousness. When one thinks right, one can do right.

"And having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace: withal taking up the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one." A strong and unyielding faith solves many complex problems. Read Hebrews 11:1 ff.

"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (V.17). The soldier's helmet was used to protect the head. In the analogy "the breastplate of righteous-

ness," and "the shield of faith," salvation is itself the helmet. "And the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God." The sword of the spirit in the Christian's weapon. It was by this weapon that our Saviour defeated Satan (Matthew 4:1-11).

"For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the

thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12, ASV).

Note, the word of God is; 1) LIVING, 2) it is active, 3) it severs the closest relationships, 4) it judges our innermost thoughts, and it is the agency through which God addresses the human heart. Dear Reader, believe and obey the truth of God today, tomorrow may be too late.

WORSHIP AS WHO LIKES IT?

Dennis Gullledge

A recent article in the "Style" section of the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* pretty well addresses the current climate of change agency in religion these days as suggested by the title, "Worship As You Like It." I found the entire piece, and the trend which it addresses disheartening because of what it seems to take for a church to grow numerically these days. It appears that a growing church is one which adheres closer to George Barna than to the Good Book, and is driven more by marketing skills than by the Master's Scheme.

The great Restoration Movement represented a sweeping return to the New Testament. Even within recent generations the masses were swayed by the power of Truth. People found a return to the Bible appealing and the endeavor to adhere strenuously to its teaching was the most desirable motivation that anyone could possess. Your labors were marked with grand success, and growth was the result, if to God's word you were faithful. Now, the picture is different. Faithful congregations are struggling to hold on to their numbers, younger couples especially. The change movement is claiming the greater number of disciples, but a renaissance for ruin it is. The crowds are following the Pied Pipers of change and are mesmerized by "limited involvement," "easy religion," "a low level of commitment," a "more entertaining worship experience," "no stress membership" and more (or should I say less). "They are catering to people

who want a low level of commitment and a low level of interaction in the church," says Russell Dilday, associate editor of *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine*. (p. 8E).

Among the churches highlighted in this article is the Chenal Valley Church (formerly, Chenal Valley Church of Christ). Danny Burleson, their preacher, described their services as "praise oriented," designed to "make people leave on a high note, not a guilt trip" (p. 8E). The article leaves one to wonder if anyone ever leaves feeling guilty about sin in their lives and the need to repent (Mt. 5:4; Acts 2:37; Jas. 4:9). Barna might not recommend it, but Jesus and Paul sure did. The article did say: "Don't expect to hear much about the fiery depths of Hades here" (p. 8E). That is regrettable because Jesus had plenty to say about it (Lk. 16:20-31). If such a truth is not to be heard there one must wonder what else of the doctrine of Christ is made expendable for ear tickling purposes (Cf., 2 Jn. 9-11).

My prayer is that the young people of this age will one day wake up and realize that games are being played in religion. Maybe the day will come when young couples will realize that they have been handed a false bill of goods, that they may "feel good," but have a depth of spiritual emptiness to show for it. When they pass through the mirage the Oasis of faithful churches will be there for them.

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THE WORDS OF Truth

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

Vol. 35 No. 3

January 17, 1998

SCRIPTURAL MARRIAGE

W.A. Holley

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:27-28).

Thus, man is a sublime creature. He is not a cat, or dog, or a horse. The theory of evolution is false. Since man was created in God's image, he bears the mark of eternity in himself. There is a part of man that will never die. Man can have fellowship and communion with his Maker or he can rebel against Him.

Being unique, man can think of the future and consider even eternity, which no animal can do. Animals mate, but human beings marry. Marriage is monogamous---one man and one woman. This is what your Bible teaches even though thousands have decided to divorce and remarry as often as they please---developing a trade-in system, whether God approves or not.

Marriage is what holds society together. Think of what the social and domestic situation, in our world, would be if there were no marriage at all!!

It is time we should take the institution of marriage seriously. Marriage is a divine institution designed to form a permanent union between man and woman that they might supply each other's needs (Genesis 2:18). A "helpmeet" is one who helps another in coping with life's problems (Genesis 2:18). Man and woman have sexual needs which must be controlled in keeping with God's will. Without the conjugal tie the inhabitants of our world would have been a mixed multitude. For example, the family circle, family instruction, parental love and care would have been altogether unknown. We can see that without maternal love all would have been lost!!

We know that God tolerated concubinage and polygamy, but from the beginning it was not so. Jesus, answering the Pharisee's question, as to whether one could put away his wife "for every cause" said, "Have ye not read, that he that made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hard-

ness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Matthew 19:3-9). This same law of God applies to the woman: "Whosoever shall put away his wife, and shall marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery" (Mark 10:11-12). What is adultery? An adulterer is one who has intercourse with the spouse of another.

What are some lessons taught in the foregoing quoted Scripture:

1. One cannot divorce his/her spouse for just any frivolous excuse. God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16).
2. Whosoever means whoever, you, or any other.
3. There are but two Scriptural reasons for a second marriage---They are fornication and death (Matthew 5:31-32; Romans 7:1-4).
4. If one marries another who was put away because of the sin of fornication becomes an adulterer. (Matthew 19:9).
5. God allows divorce and remarriage only for an innocent person whose companion has committed fornication. Fornication is a general term for all forms of sexual conduct. Hence, to divorce and remarry for any other reason is to enter an adulterous relationship (Matthew 5:31-32).

When the Apostle Paul wished to extol the virtues of the church he used as an analogy the marriage relationship. Read Ephesians 5:22-33. We learn that if marriage is to succeed, it must be built upon submissive love on the part of the wife (Ephesians 5:22-24). Husbands must exhibit sacrificial love for their wives (Ephesians 5:25). There must be a sanctifying love if your marriage is to survive (Ephesians 5:26). Marriage as described in your Bible must be a sensitive love. "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church" (Ephesians 5:28-29). Husbands, wives, be aware of the moral, physical and spiritual needs of each other. "Nevertheless let every one of you in particular love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband" (Ephesians 5:33). This does not mean that wives are inferior to their husbands but it does mean that they wish to follow the Scriptural rules in the home.

In addition, there must be a sustaining love. "For this

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Three Ingredients For Controlling
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EARTHEN VESSELS
SING GOD A SWEET SONG

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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Three Ingredients For Controlling Stress, Part 3

In Philippians 4:6-7 the apostle writes, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

"Be careful for nothing" literally means, "Have no anxiety about anything". In our time we might employ slang and say, "Be stressed-out about nothing."

Perhaps it would be good to first examine what this does not teach. This doesn't teach that we are not to have any concern at all about temporal, material matters, such as preserving property or providing for our families. I Timothy 5:8 in fact demands that Christian husbands pay serious attention to keeping good employment: "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." Worse than an infidel! The Bible offers no comfort to the lazy man who isn't sufficiently concerned about providing for the material needs of his family. God provides food for the birds but He doesn't put it in the nests!

What Philippians 4:6-7 does teach is that we are to have such confidence in God as to free our minds from serious stress and anxiety. Great faith is demanded, (Romans 10:17). Jesus said, "Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"

"But," one might object, "How can I possibly control my anxiety as this teaches?" The inspired

writer gives us the tools:

1. Rejoice in the Lord (Philippians 4:4).
2. Be thankful for what you have (Philippians 4:6).
3. Pray for what you want (Philippians 4:6).

People who are always thankful rarely worry about what they may never get. As one man said, "Chronic worry and gratitude seldom, if ever, keep company." "Godliness with contentment is great gain" (I Timothy 6:6).

The promise is more to be desired than silver and gold: "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7). This is peace from the storms and stresses of this life.

Isaiah 26:3 says, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

Note finally, that the passage promises that this peace of God "shall keep your hearts and minds..." "Shall keep" is a military term meaning that the mind would be guarded as a camp or a castle is guarded. It would be preserved from the intrusion of anxious fears and alarms.

Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

May all Christians take full advantage of the peace which passes all understanding through Christ Jesus.

MOST OF A MINUTE - EARTHEN VESSELS

Want to know my personal method of handling vinyl siding phone solicitations? I say, "My schedule is really very full, but if you'd like to send a representative out to measure and then mail his estimate to me, I will consider it." I haven't seen one yet who was willing to take me up on the offer. They are so convinced that personal contact is what sells their product that they won't even attempt a sale without it.

We ought to learn a lesson from that in converting the lost to Christ. In speaking of the Gospel Paul observed in 2 Corinthians 4:7, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels..." He was underscoring the fact that humans were the medium Christ chose to spread the Gospel. Sending out the printed page is important, but nothing is as good as hearing it from the mouth of someone else.

SCRIPTURAL MARRIAGE, *continued from page 1*

cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh" (Ephesians 5:31). In far too many instances marriages of our day do not last very long. One source indicates that there are approximately 4,000 divorces each day.

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be on flesh" (Genesis 2:24). Note, the words "leave" and "cleave." These words are extremely important! While parents are important, they must fall into the background. The focus of the new husband and wife is upon each other. A husband who is more interested in golf, fishing, or other activity, is unlikely to build a strong relationship.

Married couples should keep on dating. They should make plans to be with each other. Vacation trips would serve a wonderful purpose of holding even older couples together.

Moreover, the married should be honest with each other, emotionally. Talk about what may be bothering you. Learn to give and take. Build a positive attitude; to be constantly fussing destroys much. Refuse to build a power struggle; avoid attempts to get even.

It is the duty of both husband and wife to contribute to the success of their marriage. Keep your temper under control. If words are spoken in anger, apologize for them---and mean it!

All husbands and wives want to be pitied, praised a little, appreciated a little; and each should realize that all the hard work is not all on one side. Remember marriage cannot run on physical attraction alone, in spite of all, in a few years age will begin to show.

Marriages may be made in heaven, but, remember both husband and wife are responsible for the maintenance work.

SING GOD A SWEET SONG

Allen Webster

God is a music lover. In fact, he wants us all to "sing Him a song," though with the life instead of the lips. He commands us, "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 1:5-8).

The word *add* (*epichoregeo*) in this text has an interesting background. It means "supply or equip" and refers back to the days of old Athens when it was considered a great honor to be a citizen who was asked to help defray the expenses of a public ceremony or entertainment. It originally referred to citizens who financed a theatrical performance or fit out a warship for the state they loved. It had a special reference to the abundant supplies provided for a chorus, which is derived from this Greek word (as is *choreographer*) (Coffman). The graces which adorn the Christian's character are to be chorused into a grand symphony to the delight and pleasure of Him who fashioned and made us for His own good pleasure. There are eight graces, and they thus form an octave of soul tones, the first being faith, the last love, an octave higher. When these are harmonized and played on by the divine Spirit, disharmony disappears and life's discords vanish. How we should rejoice that we have been privileged to provide such an instrument in the hand of God! (Woods).

FAITH is the foundation (Phil. 4:13). By it we have been justified (Rm. 5:1); by it we walk (2 Cor 5:7); by it we please God (Heb. 11:6); and by it we overcome the world (1 Jn 5:4,5). Faith that does not add the graces is dead (Jas. 2:17-26; 1 Pet. 2:1,2; 2 Pet. 3:18). The New Birth is not the end, it is the beginning. Spiritual growth is not automatic. It requires cooperation with God and the application of spiritual diligence and discipline (Phil. 2:12,13).

VIRTUE (*aretē*) denotes courage. Our English word *virtue* is derived from the Latin word *vir*, meaning "man." But it describes only a certain kind of man. *Homo* also meant "man" but applied to any man of the human species. *Vir* denoted a man of strength, courage, and good character. It included moral strength. This is one reason our word *virtue* is used as a synonym for purity, as in *virgin*. We were called to virtue ("excellence") (1:3). It basically means the manliness and determination to do that which is right. It is used in four verses in the New Testament: once by Paul (Phil. 4:8) and three

times by Peter (1 Pet. 2:9; 2 Pet. 1:3,5). A virtuous person has the fortitude to stand for Christ no matter what the odds, to speak out for Him no matter what the costs, even to die for Him if necessary.

KNOWLEDGE (*gnosis*) is gained by the faithful continuation of studies in the Scriptures. Knowledge helps us to see things as they really are. Zeal without knowledge, like a ship without a rudder, becomes fanaticism. Saul of Tarsus was willing to kill for in his ignorant zeal (1 Tim. 1:13), but in his knowledgeable zeal he was willing to die for Christ (Acts 21:13). Spiritual ignorance has been the cause of people being destroyed (Hos. 4:6); being alienated from God (Eph. 4:18); crucifying the Lord (Acts 3:14-17); and be eternally lost (2 Thes. 1:7-9). We are commanded to understand the will of the Lord (Eph. 5:17), grow in knowledge (2 Pet. 3:18), to the point where we can even be teachers (Heb. 5:14). Are we "diligent" to add this virtue day by day? How often do you study?

TEMPERANCE is only found two other times in the NT (Acts 24:25; Gal. 5:22). It refers to self-control or "keeping oneself in check" (*engrateia*, from *en* and *krates*, "one who holds himself in" or "getting a grip on oneself"). Temperance is the discipline of an athlete (1 Cor. 9:24-27; Phil. 3:12-16; 1 Tim. 4:7,8). It is "reason's girdle as well as passion's bridle" (Taylor). Chrysostom said it meant "mastering passion of tongue, hand and unbridled eyes." The saint is not the man who gets away from the world, but one who stays in the world but never lets *it* master him. Temperance is the iron side of the silver coin of patience. It means to totally abstain from those things that are wrong and to be balanced in those things that are right. It is not a problem for a Christian to avoid drunkenness. But it takes good judgment to know limits of eating, exercise, recreation, and sleep. We need to know where self control ends and over-indulgence begins. Fishing, ball playing, and other sports are not sinful because they are pleasurable. Eating is not wrong because it is tasteful. However, if these get out of balance, they become sinful (Mt. 6:33).

We should be as Christ who yielded Himself to God (Jn. 8:29; cf. Rm. 6:13). Temperance is the opposite of the "let go" philosophy of the wild world around us. Those who have not mastered themselves are at the mercy and control of others. They move at the whims of their peers and are under majority rule. The wise man discussed the value of this ability (Prov. 16:32; 25:28). This surrender produces self-control of:

* Our *temper* (Eph. 4:26), "And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, Set on bread" (Gen. 43:31).

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SING GOD A SWEET SONG, *continued from page 3*

* Our *tongue* (Jas. 3:1-12; Psa. 39:1,2).

* Our *thoughts* (Mt. 15:19) or passions (Phil. 3:12-16; Tit. 2:12).

* Our *tendencies* (1 Cor. 6:12). Paul discussed self-control with Felix and he “trembled” (Acts 24:25). It is no wonder that Felix was terrified. He was a stranger to righteousness, knew no self-control, and was unprepared for the judgment. According to Tacitus, this man was guilty of “every kind of cruelty, and lust, he exercised the authority of a king with the temper of a slave.” In his *Annals* (11:54), Tacitus further represents Felix as considering himself licensed to commit any crime with impunity. The last of his three wives, the beautiful Drusilla, young daughter of Herod Agrippa I, was wooed away from her husband Azizus, king of Amesa. Thus Felix had been married three times and Drusilla twice (Prov. 6:32).

PATIENCE (*hupomone*, literally “abiding or remaining under”) is the ability to resist evil and bear up (endure) when circumstances are difficult (Jas. 1:3; 5:7-11; Rm. 2:7; 5:3-5). It means to “remain when others have departed; to remain; not to flee” (Oberst). Thayer says “...unswerved from his deliberate purpose...by even the greatest of trials and sufferings.” No race was ever won by a runner that failed to finish the course (2 Tim. 4:7,8). Self-control has to do with handling the *pleasures* of life, while patience relates primarily to the *pressures* and *problems* of life. (The ability to endure problem people is “long-suffering.”) Often, the person who “gives in” to pleasures is not disciplined enough to handle pressures either, so he “gives up.” Jesus said, “In your patience possess ye your souls” (Lk. 21:19). Patience is not something that develops automatically; we must work at it. James 1:2-8 gives us the right approach. We must, by faith, let our trials work *for* us and not against us. If we need wisdom in making decisions, God will grant that wisdom if we ask Him.

GODLINESS (*eusebeia*) simply means “God-like-ness” or “manifesting God in the flesh.” Tracing the stem root (*seb*), back it meant to “fall back before,” thus came to mean “to worship well.” Perhaps the words *reverence* and *piety* come closer to defining the term. It is found in the Septuagint translation of Proverbs 1:7, “...the *fear of the Lord* is the beginning of wisdom.” Paul uses the word ten times in the letters to Timothy and Titus (1 Tim. 2:2; 3:16; 4:7,8; 6:3-5,6,11; 2 Tim. 3:12). The godly person lives above the petty things

of life, the passions and pressures that control the lives of others. The first and great commandment was to love God (Mt. 22:37). Too often in our world religious duties are relegated to a secondary status, and humanitarian duties have been elevated to the status that really belongs to religious duties. Some maintain an outward form and deny the inner power of godliness (2 Tim. 3:5). Christians are practical enough to realize that the Bible governs their everyday lives.

BROTHERLY KINDNESS is the love of tender affection and attachment (*philadelphia*, which comes from *philo*, meaning the love of brothers, or, even, the affection that an animal has for its young). As God is our Father, His children are our brethren, and we must have love for the family. When reverence for God overflows our hearts, love toward God’s people follows. If we love Jesus, we must also love the brethren (1 Pet. 1:22; 4:17; Heb. 13:1; Rm. 12:10; 1 Jn. 5:1,2). On occasion it seems that members of the church are harsher in their dealings with one another than the children of the world. Brotherly kindness is the opposite of being judgmental, censorious disagreeable, partial, political, and unkind (1 Cor. 13:7). When we continually point out the faults of loved ones but never compliment them when they do well, we are “watering the weeds” and letting the flowers die.

LOVE (*agape*) is the crowning virtue. “And the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13). “And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness (Col. 3:14). This is the highest type of love, the kind that God shows toward sinful, unworthy men. It is described in 1 Corinthians 13, the love that the Holy Spirit produces in our hearts as we walk in the Spirit (Rm. 5:5; Gal. 5:22). When we have brotherly love, we love because of our likenesses to others; but with agape love, we love in spite of the difference we have. Paul began his list of the fruit of the Spirit with love (Gal. 5:22); Peter ends his list with love. It is like a chain; each link holds fast to its fellow and is a part of the whole.

This great list of virtues is one of the most beautiful and comprehensive passages in the New Testament, reminding one of the procession of the seven deadly sins (by contrast) in Proverbs 6:16-18. If we will add these notes to our soul’s song, God will like the tune we sing.

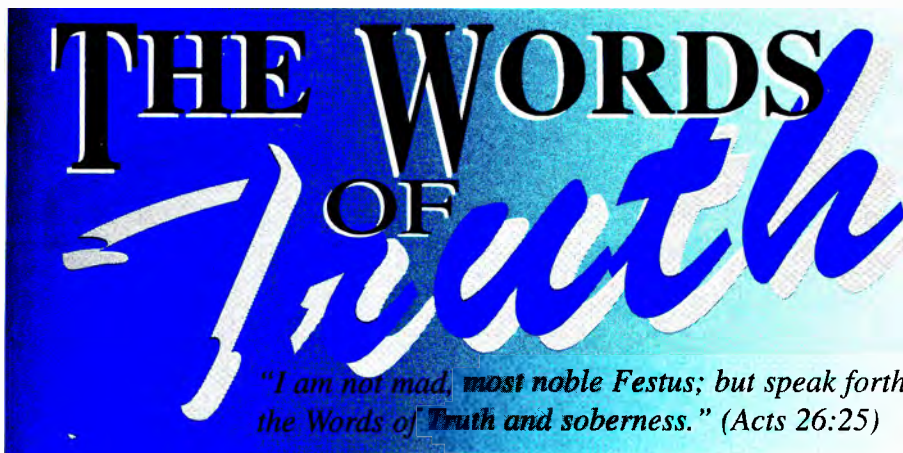
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Vol. 35 No. 4

January 25, 1998

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

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 BAPTISM IS ESSENTIAL FOR
 SALVATION
 "OUT OF THE SAME MOUTH"
 STAND UP FOR TRUTH

LIVING WATERS

Johnny Ramsey

When we truly thirst for truth there is a fountain that cools our tongues and warms our heart at the same time. Jesus told the woman at that well in Samaria about it in John 4:14. The redeemed host in Revelation 7:17 found it after being delivered from great tribulation. We, today, have access to peace and comfort and joy now as we walk hand in hand with God! The following quote should remind us of many passages of Scripture in Psalms, the life of Christ and the epistles of Paul:

***Sometimes God calms the storm
 Sometimes He lets the storm rage
 While He calms His child!***

The powerful storms of life cannot overwhelm the devotion of Christians who steadfastly refuse to buckle under the pangs of adversity. The fickle promises of our restless society will never compare to the constant beauty of godliness. In the midst of turmoil and frenzy disciples of the Lord follow the footsteps of Jesus through the anguish and pain of Gethsemane, Gabbatha and Golgotha on to victory through the everlasting doors of glory (Psalms 24:9-10). Our Lord did suffer heartache in the Garden (Matthew 26:42) but won the struggle as He surrendered to the will of Jehovah as we learn in Philippians 2:8...

***He became obedient...even unto
 the death of the cross...***

At Gabbatha (John 19:13), where Pilate, in mockery, tried the Savior, once more the power of truth triumphed. Christ was sentenced to die but through that death we have everlasting life and access to fountains of living waters (Hebrews 2:14-18)!

***Up from the grave He arose
 With a mighty triumph over His foes...***

Verily, the dark domain gave way to a bright

tomorrow for the saints of God. Even at Golgotha, the place of the skull, where crucifixion was the order of the day (John 19:17), a ray of hope hovered in the shadows. Jesus refused relief for parched lips that we might benefit from One who tasted death for us (Hebrews 2:9) and that living water could bless our souls forevermore. In the splendid words of the Savior on the mount our Redeemer spoke of the benefits that accrue to those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. When we have an insatiable yearning for holiness we shall be filled with satisfaction, contentment and zest in serving our Maker. Psalms 42 challenges us:

***As the wild animal pants for the waterbrook
 So longeth my soul for Thee, O God...***

What Should We Yearn For Today?

- A closer walk with Jesus. 1 John 1:17
- A better grasp of Scripture. Nehemiah 8:8
- A spiritual emphasis in life. Luke 2:49
- A deeper love for the lost. James 5:19-20
- A constant care for brethren. 1 Peter 1:22
- A better influence in life. Matthew 5:16
- A home that glorifies God. Psalms 127:1
- A personal growth in holiness. 1 Peter 1:16

Fountains of unquenchable refreshing can bless our lives and bring us out of the desert of sorrow and sin into the verdant pastures of God's redemptive grace. May we be wise enough to walk therein with genuine thanksgiving!

***As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus
 the Lord,
 so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him,
 and established in the faith, as ye have been
 taught,
 abounding therein with thanksgiving.
 Colossians 2:6-7***

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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THE MAGIC OF RELIGION

An odd accident took Michael Kennedy's life on New Year's Eve. The ski patrol had warned Michael and his family that their ski-games were too dangerous, but the game continued, and the 39 year old son of the late Robert F. Kennedy was killed when he hit a tree.

This article however concerns not so much the death, but an observation reported by Couri Hay, a New York publicist who happened to be at the scene, who described what she saw that day after the accident: "Several of the Kennedys were on their knees saying the Lord's prayer." As a student of the word of God I find that perplexing. We have studied the Lord's (better called the "model") prayer. Most of us can quote it. In the context Jesus was teaching His disciples to pray. Yet reciting the prayer has no special power. Jesus never even suggested that it should be quoted when we address God. To recite the prayer as a loved one is dying or just after death is at best a misguided attempt to get God's attention and favor. We would not question the sincerity of those who do it, but neither would we pretend that it has any particular value. It is not according to God's will. It probably amounts to little more than man's abstract idea of religious magic. An amulet, or good luck charm, if you please.

Before we are too critical however, we would do well to pause and consider if we are guilty of the same kind of misguided attempts in religion. Are there things people often consider to be magic tokens to gain God's approval? Read on:

How many have a Bible on the coffee table or on a prominent shelf in the house, who never find time to seriously study, but who wouldn't consider getting rid of their family Bible? Does owning the book have some special value spiritually? No. The only value it has is when it is studied and its truth is applied to people's lives. There's no magic here. No special charm. A man may ignore the Bible until he gets very ill and then reach for it. That's good--he needs to reach for it--but reading a few chapters in time of crisis is not where the value of God's word lies. It is in serious study and obedience (II Tim. 2:15). James wrote, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22).

How many have decided that the Lord's supper has some special power? Some may live in negligence of God's will, never studying God's word, never becoming too involved in the work of the Lord's church, but make sure they eat the Lord's supper every Sunday. They may drag in late, sleep through the service, and be eager to get out to the restaurant,

but they feel satisfied in worship because they have had communion. Is the Lord's supper a magic act with some power to gain God's approval even if one lives a careless life? Of course not. The Lord's supper is a memorial for those who examine themselves, who want to show the Lord's death, who discern the Lord's body, and who are serious about serving the Master. To feel that I can live as a weak church member and still be God-approved because I never miss the Lord's supper, is to place a significance on the supper that God never intended. It isn't magic.

Even baptism is sometimes viewed in such a way. The late and beloved Franklin Camp, when discussing this point in his book Old Truths in New Robes. Vol.1. said on Page 104, "People say, 'Here is a good man, all he needs to do is to be baptized.' No, he needs to be converted first. (Baptism) is designed for people who are prepared in heart and mind. Faith in Christ and repentance prepare the heart (Acts 2:37, 2:41)." This point also needs to be observed with reference to parents and their children. A mom or dad may be so eager for their son or daughter to be baptized that they forget that conversion must come first. Baptism will do no good if not preceded by belief and true repentance of the heart (Eph. 2:12-17; Rom. 3:23).

Some may think that there is some magic in their contributions to the church. They may live a life out of harmony with God's will and yet feel good about their Christianity because they are prone to make contributions to the Lord's work. Yet the Bible reveals a different picture of our giving. It is to be cheerful and unselfish (II Cor. 9:7-9). To think that somehow my lack of faithfulness will be overlooked if I contribute enough money is folly. There's no magic in that money plate. Our contributions to the Lord's work are to be simply a part of the bigger picture. We are giving ourselves in all that we do. He wants us to be a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1-2).

The Lord's model prayer is important. But let us remember not to make it, or any other religious practice, something it is not. Christianity is not a religion of good luck charms and magic spells. True Christianity is a life lived in humble and daily service to the King of Kings. Serve Christ and be a better husband, wife, son, daughter, employee, employer. Live in sincere devotion. Worship truly in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:24). No magic. Just sincere, steady commitment, and a deep gratitude for all He has done for us.

Let us be people of the Book.

THOUGHTS ON PLACING MEMBERSHIP

Mel Futrell

To say that we live in a transient society is an understatement at best. I'm told that the average person will move eight times in their life. Wow! Yet, thankfully, many also plant their feet at a place and stay right there. The truth is, good and bad, both result from a mobile society.

My judgment is that likewise, the same is true with regard to the local church. Congregations are blessed by the arrival of individuals and families who are sound in doctrine and desire to place their membership or identify themselves with the local church. But sadly, many times even sound brethren float from city to city and congregation to congregation without ever seeing the need to place membership with the Lord's people at a particular locale. Why is that? Perhaps we have failed to not only stress the value of placing membership but the utter need to. I'm aware that some would take issue with what I say. So let me be perfectly clear where I stand on this matter. I believe recognized local church membership to be very important, and that opponents of such have no leg to stand on. Here's why!

FOR INVOLVEMENT REASONS

First, the Bible doesn't recognize any institution larger than or smaller than the local church for doing the work God has prescribed. But if one is not a part of a local congregation how can he contribute to such efforts? Brethren who drift from church to church never take responsibility. Involvement in the local church is a mark of loyalty and genuine loyalty demands involvement.

FOR OVERSIGHT PURPOSES

Second, the elders of the local church, and every church should strive to have elders (Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5), cannot watch for the souls (Heb. 13:17) of those who fail to indicate their intent to be a part of the local family. Are elders to assume that anyone who walks through the door is under their oversight? Will

elders one day "give account" for the souls of those who refuse to identify with the local church? I think not!

IN COMPLIANCE WITH APOSTOLIC EXAMPLE

Third, Luke tells us in Acts 9:26:

"And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple."

It is evident from Acts 9:19-30 that Paul, after his conversion, worked with the church in Damascus (vss. 19-22). From there he moves to Jerusalem and seeks membership at the local church in Jerusalem (vs. 26). At first he is hindered because of fear over him. But the testimony of Barnabas prevails and Saul begins working and worshipping in Jerusalem (vss. 27-29). Is it an accident that this account of placing membership was recorded here? Absolutely not. The Holy Spirit Himself is responsible for its preservation (1 Cor. 2:13)!

COMMON SENSE

Fourth, it just makes sense. What I mean is that we appreciate our visitors. But there is a big difference between being company and being a part of the local family. Guests just don't have the same privileges or responsibilities that local family members do. Isn't that the way it is in the physical family? If there isn't some way of identifying who's in the local family and who is not, how can we appoint elders and deacons, select teachers, or plan a congregational budget, etc.? For that matter how can we do much of anything! Brethren must know who they can count on.

For these reasons, and others not listed, we fail to see how or why any New Testament Christian would refuse to articulate to the local church their desire to work and worship with them. Are you aware that there are New Testament Christians in our city that have not placed membership with the local church? Is local

MOST OF A MINUTE - BAPTISM IS ESSENTIAL FOR SALVATION

One of the most interesting and most confused subjects in the Bible is baptism, and there are two major ideas among people. One, that we are saved before we are baptized; and two, that baptism is an act that is essential to be saved. Which is true? Consider these verses on baptism and then decide.

--Jesus: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

--Paul: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus; for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27).

--Peter: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." (Acts 2:38).

--Ananias: "And now why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins..." (Acts 22:16).

“OUT OF THE SAME MOUTH”

Dalton Key

Some hypocrisies are more easily concealed than others; hiding a forked tongue is almost impossible. If those who make a habit of speaking out of both sides of their mouth could only hear themselves as others hear them, perhaps they would think more and say less.

Most of us are growing weary of hearing...
...a brother or sister in Christ who praises someone to his face, only to riddle him with carping criticism the moment his back is turned.

...fellow-Christians who sing, “I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord.” during the Sunday morning services, and then tear the church apart over lunch.

...brethren who speak words of piety before the church and words of vulgarity before the world.

...Christian husbands and wives who speak with warmth and kindness to everyone - except one another.

“Blessing and cursing come out of the same mouth. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. Does a fountain give sweet and bitter water from the same opening? My brothers, can a fig tree produce olives, or a vine figs? Neither can saltwater yield sweet” (James 3:10-12, McCord).

We may attempt to deceive; we may be quick to deny. But we deceive no one but ourselves and deny nothing but the painfully obvious: “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matthew 12:35).

STAND UP FOR TRUTH

Jimmy Jividen

When Israel was preparing to enter the land of Canaan, Moses gave this exhortation:

“So you shall observe to do just as the Lord your God had commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left” (Deuteronomy 5:32).

They had a body of revealed truth to keep without compromising with the culture of Canaan. To the degree they followed this exhortation, they remained faithful to God. To the degree they refused, they apostatized.

Historians have often observed the process of apostasy. At first there is a people grounded in the truth with a desire not to wander either to the right or to the left. Compromise with error is first resisted. After a time, compromise is tolerated. After a period of toleration errors is espoused. Finally the espoused error is defended. Apostasy has taken place. All that it takes for error to triumph is for good men to say nothing.

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THE WORDS OF Truth

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)*

Vol. 35 No. 5

January 29, 1998

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**WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT
THE PROCRASTINATING
SERVANT
WHAT IS A BLESSED MAN?
WHY WE SHOULD OBEY THE
LAW
ARE YOU WASHED IN THE
BLOOD?
THE POWER OF MEDITATION**

WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT

Johnny Ramsey

A very good friend of mine has two favorite Bible verses. One of them clearly tells us that our treasure is where the heart is (Matthew 6:21) and the other one is Ecclesiastes 9:10:

**"Whatsoever your hands find to do,
do it with all your might."**

It is evident that both passages challenge us to be sincere, dedicated and fervent in all our spiritual affairs. Nonchalance will never be accepted as we pursue heavenly matters. In every arena of life success comes with all-out effort and enthusiasm. A ball team that "just goes through the motions" will never compare favorably with a spirited, aggressive opponent. Folk who come in late, grab a back seat, listen spasmodically and then rush home never contribute heartily to the assembly of the saints, either! So many people rob themselves of the joy and flavor of life by being so indifferent to the real values of life. One of these days they will regret the mediocrity of a lifestyle that will bring no genuine rewards or pleasant memories. They kept saving themselves for something as they conserved their energy rather than pursuing righteousness with all their might! Millions rob themselves of untold joys by being half-hearted in their allegiance to

the Lord. Such folk get precious little out of Christianity because they put so little excitement into it! When we look in the mirror each morning we need to promise ourselves and our Maker that this will be a day to remember for its fervor and goodness.

Finally, in making application of giving all-out effort, Christians who work in public must never hold back their best endeavor because laziness reflects upon the Lord and His cause. Read Titus 2:10 and Colossians 3:23 and you will see this definite principle. Therefore, let all of us who profess to be followers of the Redeemer adhere to the inspired maxim:

**"Whatsoever your hands find to do,
do it with all your might."**

Nothing would bring more glory and honor to our blessed Savior than ardent, devoted and consecrated soldiers of the Christ giving their best to the Captain of our salvation. Perhaps this parting statement will help us mightily:

"A diamond is a piece of coal that stuck to the job."

Truly, where our treasure is, there will our heart be also (Matthew 6:21).

THE PROCRASTINATING SERVANT

Jack Williams

14 years old - "I've just become a Christian, I don't know enough and I'm still too young to be involved in the work of the church."

16 years old - "I've just got my driver's license. I have to work to take care of my driving expenses. And of course this is the time in my life when I am very busy with friends, and you wouldn't believe all the school activities I have! I'll get involved a little later."

18 years old - "I just graduated from high school! Now I need a little time for myself before I enter the real world. I'll have more time for the work of the church later."

20 years old - "I never knew college took so much

time! When I get out and on my own I'll have time for church work then."

22 year old - "Boy, did you have any idea how hard it was to get started in the work place? It takes all my energy to get my career on line. And on top of that I just got married...I have to spend time to mold my new family life too. In a couple of years I'll be ready to really dig into the work of the church."

24 years old - "Children! I never believed my parents when they told me how much time and money it took to raise them. I sure don't have time for the work of the church now...when my kids get older I'll be able to do my share of the work then."

Continued on Page 3

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
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WHAT IS A BLESSED MAN?

Those of us who enjoy studying the Word of God are always eager to broaden our understanding of oft used and familiar passages and words and doctrines. Consider the word "Blessed."

For years, whole teaching from Matthew 5 on the Beatitudes, men have said, "Blessed means happy." In fact, a couple of translations translate the word "Happy." We are convinced that the word means much more.

In the King James translation of the Bible, there are two major words translated blessed. They are "Ulogeo," and "Makarios." Makarios is the original word for blessed in the Beatitudes.

Thayer says the word carries the idea of congratulations, with the reason expressed by a noun or predicate in the verse (Page 386, #3701).

I suggest that the word blessed in these verses (Matthew 5:3-11) is actually a congratulation which means, "approved of God." This definition holds true in many other verses as well. It is clearly the case in Matthew 25:34 where the King will say, "Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Keeping in mind our "Approved of God" definition, read these verses containing the word *Blessed*:

"And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women" (Luke 1:28).

"Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching..." (Luke 12:37).

"Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

"Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Romans 4:7,8).

"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him" (James 1:12).

"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:25).

"Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand" (Revelation 1:3).

And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, "Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13).

"Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14).

There are of course other uses of the word blessed, and perhaps they all would imply happiness in some respect. When it comes to our eternal destiny however, we do not simply want to be happy. We first want to be approved of God. May we all live prepared for His return so that when the trumpet sounds we will hear those sweet words from our Master's lips, "Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

MOST OF A MINUTE - WHY WE SHOULD OBEY THE LAW

Have you ever been in jail before? It's not a very nice place. But it's an important place if we are to live in a free and happy society. Sometimes people live in such a way that they must be removed from society and incarcerated to protect the people around them.

The Bible addresses the subject of punishment like this, and implies that if we break the law, then punishment is good enough for us.

Romans 13:5 says, "...ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake,"

We ought to do right and avoid wrong first because if we don't, we may suffer the wrath of civil authorities with a fine or imprisonment; And second, because our conscience will hurt us when we know we have sinned against God Almighty.

36 years old - "It seems the older the kids get the more they are involved in! Home from work, then to the school functions, then sports...I'll be glad when the kids get older so I can really be involved in the work of the church."

46 years old - "I've never had so much fun! Grandchildren! I should have had them first. I can't deprive them...when they get older I'll be able to really be involved in the church."

56 years old - "I'm on my last push at work now. I've got to really bear down for a few years now so I can

be ready for retirement. And of course we have our place at the lake we're fixing up. In a few years I'll be able to quit the 'rat race' and get involved in the church."

66 year old - 'Retirement at last!' I've worked so hard so many years and now I can enjoy the fruit of my efforts. It's time now for the young ones here at church to carry on and let us 'veterans' rest a little."

Instead of such a person as described above, isn't it great to see people who use their abilities in God's service NOW! Which are we?

ARE YOU WASHED IN THE BLOOD?

G.F. Raines

In language strongly and beautifully expressive of the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus "the Lamb of God" (John 1:36), the apostle John says concerning one of his awesome and majestic visions on the Isle of Patmos, "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and Whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 7:13,14).

The tribulation through which those whom John saw had passed is the common experience of all faithful children of God; for it is plainly stated in the New Testament that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22; cf. 2 Tim. 3:12).

The word of God is the channel of divine grace by which the blood of Christ is brought into redemptive contact with the soul. Peter says: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Pet. 1:22,23).

The word of God is the word (gospel) of Christ (John 3:34; 12:48,49; Heb. 1:1,2); and the apostle Paul says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ;

for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16).

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews says: "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8,9).

All who are now saved by the blood of Jesus have been translated into Jesus Christ, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:7).

"Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Rom. 6:3; cf. Gal. 3:27).

"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:5).

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

"Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing pow'r?
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour?
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?"

THE POWER OF MEDITATION

W.A. Holley

"Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation" (Psalm 5:1).

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14).

"O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:97).

"Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all" (1 Timothy 4:15).

To meditate means to focus one's thoughts, to reflect

upon, or ponder over; to plan, intend, purpose.

Meditation is a duty which ought to be attended to by all Christians who wish to draw nearer to God Almighty. Spiritual interest should characterize those who seek to be close to their Maker. Meditation may be described as a devotional act, consisting in deliberate reflection upon some spiritual truth or duty.

A very faithful elderly lady of the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ has requested me to express some thoughts with regard to meditation and its benefits. I am more than happy

THE POWER OF MEDITATION, *continued from page 3*

to do so.

I shall point out some areas of meditation which can help us wonderfully:

(1) Meditate upon God as the creator of heaven and earth and all things therein. You are a part of God's creation. In Paul's marvelous sermon preached in the City of Athens, on Mars hill, he said, "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious (religious, ASV). For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.

"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things:

"And hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he is not far from every one of us;

"For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stones, graven by art and man's devices. And the times of this ignorance God winked at: but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:22-31).

Hence, give God the praise and glory, who created you and before whom you must stand in the Great Judgment.

In your meditation thank God for His church and the fellowship wherein you stand. The church is precious: it is

Christ Jesus who is its head (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:21-30). The church cost Jesus His life's blood (Acts 20:28). Here we are associated with the redeemed of earth. Ask for the finest attitude---the warmest spirit---the kindest relationship possible.

Think of how simple the Lord's plan of salvation is. It's not difficult to understand. How wonderful it is to know that those with limited education can comprehend it: Believe, repent, confess Jesus' name, and be baptized in his name for remission of sins (Hebrews 11:6; Matthew 10:32-33; Luke 13:3; Acts 2:36-38).

Reflect upon your personal life. Is it as good as you want it to be? How can you improve it? Where should you begin? What changes should be made? Resolve to begin now. Could you manifest a better attitude and disposition?

In your musings consider your contributions to the church. Is it little or much? Are you an asset or liability to the Lord's church? Think of the ways your contributions to the church could be improved. Are you a disgruntled, faultfinding, unhappy member? Could you give more time and money to support the Lord's will and way?

In your meditations thank God for His divine providence which has brought you thusfar along life's pathway. "O sing a new song; for he hath done marvelous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory. The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen" (Psalm 98:1-2).

As you think privately consider whether or not you are faithful to your Master. "...Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," said Jesus (Revelation 2:10; Matthew 24:13).

God is faithful (Psalm 36:5;89:2). God always keeps His promises. God is worthy of the love and confidence of men, and assures us that he will certainly fulfill his promises, as well as execute his threats against sinful conduct.

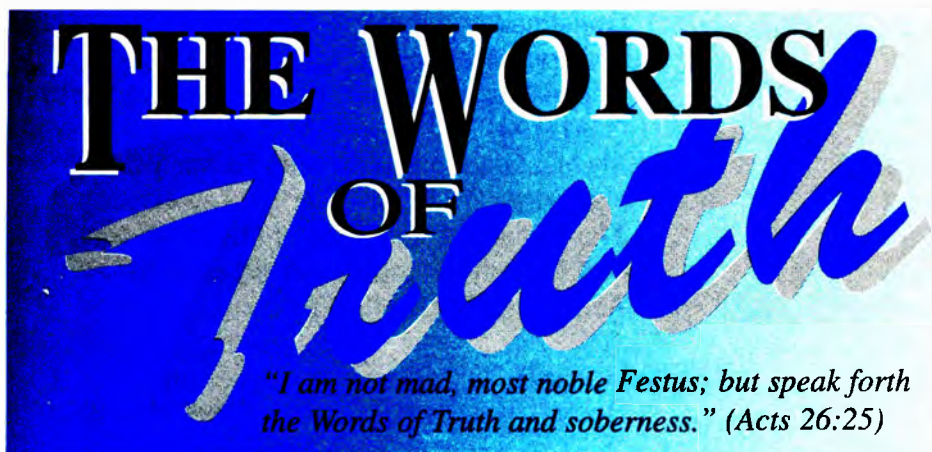
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MOST OF A MINUTE - HOME TOWN ADVANTAGE

Two football teams are equal in every way. Both teams have the same number of players. The players average almost exactly the same weight and size, and have practiced the same number of days.

Now, which team would you say had the best chance of winning a game between them. Can't say? Well, what if I tell you that this game will be played in one of the teams hometown, and in their stadium? That settles the question of who had the advantage. They have home team advantage.

There is a spiritual lesson here too.

Hebrews 10:25 says we are not to "Forsake the assembling of ourselves together." That means that if we can be at worship services, and choose not to be, we sin. But look at the reason given in verse 24: "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works."

As Christians we are at home with our spiritual family - and we need to be with them for the home team advantage against worldliness.

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THE WORDS OF Truth

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)*

Vol. 35 No. 7

February 12, 1998

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:
"GOING ON UNTO
PERFECTION" (No. 1)
THE POPE
SINS IN OUR SINGING
NOBODY TALKS ABOUT
ABORTION INCONSISTENCY

"GOING ON UNTO PERFECTION" (No. 1)

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

The four interesting, intriguing words composing our title are drawn from the opening trio of verses of Hebrews 6. They read, "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit."

AN ANALYSIS OF THIS CONTROVERSIAL PASSAGE

"Therefore" is a linking term connecting what is about to be said with what has just been said in the closing part of chapter five. No new topic is introduced simply because of a chapter's change.

The inspired writer, in all probability Paul, urged these "babes" to leave the first principles of Christ and press on (put forth full exertion) toward perfection (a full grown condition in Christ). A number of commentators, even among us, think Paul was referring to Judaistic principles in this verse while others are of the persuasion that he is speaking of the first principles of Christianity. The former is not very likely and for these cogent reasons. (1) In these three verses he is speaking of the same elementary principles as he did in the closing three verses of chapter five. (2) In chapter five he is speaking of the rudiments that introduced them into Christ--first principles of the gospel. (3) Does Paul inculcate their need to be taught again the first principles of Judaism? (4) Be it kept in mind that it had now been thirty or more years since the first converts had left Judaism and accepted the gospel. (5) Paul is doing everything in his power to keep them from going back to Judaism--not encouraging them to take a refresher course in Judaism! (6) It is far more likely that Paul was encouraging them to leave the first principles that introduced them into Christ, such as hearing, faith, repentance, confession and baptism. (7) Furthermore, the Greek construction here means "the word of the beginning of Christ."

These "babes" were not to forget these first principles or cease to believe such. They were merely to leave them in the same way a person who builds a house leaves a well-laid foundation and goes on with the superstructure or a person leaves the multiplication table for more advanced parts of mathematics. One can never press on to Christian perfection in Christian living and

service if he never advances beyond the ABC's of the gospel.

They were not to lay again the foundation (the first principles) of repentance (a change of mind) from dead works (works of sin separating them from God in their preconversion days) and of faith toward God (belief of God's testimony so essential in first pleasing Him as per Hebrews 11:6). These were conditional in their becoming Christians.

Why do we have baptisms in the plural since, according to Paul in Ephesians 4:5, there is only one baptism. But be it recalled in the first century these people had known John's baptism, the baptism of the Holy Spirit that came upon a selected few such as the apostles and Cornelius' household in Acts 2 and 10 and by implication on Paul in Acts 9 as well as the water baptism of the Great Commission. No doubt the Hebrews were familiar with all these and associated them with the first principles that had been proclaimed to them.

Laying on of hands by apostles is how spiritual gifts were imparted. In Acts 19:1ff Paul did this just subsequent to their baptism in water. Peter and John had done the same in Samaria in Acts 8. Hence, it, too, was a foundational part of Christianity.

Neither were they to lay again or just remain with the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. Due to so many skeptics relative to these subjects among the Sadducees and infidelic pagans of the day, they doubtlessly preached these cardinal themes as first principles. Cases in point are Paul at Athens and before Felix. To the Athenian philosophers on Mars Hill he preached both the resurrection and judgment. This he did before any of them obeyed the gospel. In fact, repentance, judgment and resurrection are all found in just two verses (Acts 17:30,31). In Acts 24:24ff Paul preached "the judgment to come" in his sermon of first principles seeking to convert the pagan governor and his worldly wife.

They were to build on these--not stay slavishly with just the foundations. The scribe of Hebrews confidently stated, "And this we will do, if God permits." None of what he encouraged in the way of Christian growth toward rich maturity was possible minus Jehovah's and Jesus' aid.

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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THE POPE

Here's how Newsweek Magazine (Jan. 19, 1998) describes the Pope's Cuba visit which has been so widely publicized: "...we are watching two of the last actors in a dying century's deadliest drama, the battle between God and militant, state-sponsored atheistic humanism."

With so much in the news lately about the Pope going to Cuba and what his influence will prove to be there, it may be a good time to examine what God's word actually says in reference to the revered papal position called "Pope."

Observe that the word "Pope" is not in the Bible, but it is in Webster's dictionary. Webster says it means "Papa," and defines it as "The bishop of Rome, the head of the Roman Catholic Church." Catholics widely believe that today's pope traces his position from the first pope, the apostle Peter. Yet Peter was not a pope. He was never called a pope, and never called himself such. And there's more: Peter does not carry the same man-made credentials of today's pope. Consider these observations:

1. Even after the resurrection of Christ from the dead, Peter denied being the head of the church. He showed Christ is the head of the church.

"To whom coming, *as unto* a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, *and* precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded" (1 Peter 2:46).

2. Paul said *Christ* is the head of the church. "For the husband is the head of his wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:23).

3. Peter described himself in terms which wouldn't fit a pope. In 1 Peter 5:1 he wrote, "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed."

Note that he refers to himself not as the head bishop or as the vicar (substitute) for Christ, but instead as "also an elder." The Greek language for that phrase is literally, "a fellow elder."

4. When apostles and elders of the church met in the Jerusalem conference to settle the matter of Christians being bound to Moses law on circumcision, it was James who presided, not Peter (Acts 15:13, 19).

5. Today's pope is said to be infallible in regard to spiritual matters. Yet Peter was not infallible in such matters. "But when Peter was come to Anitoch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before *them* all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" (Galatians 2:11-14).

6. The Catholic Church demands and expects that their popes live in an unmarried state. Yet Peter was clearly married: "And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever" (Matthew 8:14).

Paul later wrote, "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" (1 Corinthians 9:5)? Cephas is Peter.

7. People bow down to the pope and worship him. Some refer to him as "Holy Lord God, the pope." But Peter was not this way. Peter would not allow men to worship him: "And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshiped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man" (Acts 10:25-26).

Perhaps you would like to carry this article to one of your Catholic friends for their consideration. The only reason--and it is a good reason--we oppose the Catholic papal system, is because of the Bible. The answer to any false religious doctrine is the Word of God. May it always be the standard in our lives for determining right from wrong in spiritual concerns. Is it your standard?

SINS IN OUR SINGING NOBODY TALKS ABOUT

Neal Pollard

Christ lays down a directive unaltered by time or culture when He says, "They that worship him [i.e., God, NP] must worship him in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). A truth concerning congregational singing in the worship of the church violated by ninety-nine percent of the religious world is the addition of mechanical instruments of music to the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs in their worship. By using such, every leader and participant therein is less noble than Balaam, who said, "I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more" (Numbers 22:18). Their action is synonymous with the worship of Cain (Genesis 4:4-7), Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-2), Jeroboam the son of Nebat (1 Kings 12:25-33), the people of Judah during Jehoshaphat's reign (1 Kings 22:43), and the Judaizers at Colosse (Colossians 2:16). The Bible warns that those who add to what God legislates will be punished (Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18).

Other egregious sins corrupting the singing of praises to God include the use of solos and choirs, to which objection is made on the grounds that both Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 teach a congregational responsibility incumbent upon every individual Christian and that the verse which says that "every one" has a psalm (1 Corinthians 14:26) is neither validated by the context or proof that Paul is speaking of anything other than a song miraculously given by God to a member for the purpose of instructing the congregation via new revelation (cf. Jude 3; 2 Peter 1:3; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). Such intrusions as these into the singing portion of worship are unauthorized and must be rejected on that basis. Anything which calls for more than God commands or subtracts from what God commands is a tract of sinking sand described by Christ in Matthew 7:26-27.

One might draw the conclusion that as long as the congregation refrains from the use of mechan-

ical instrumental music, solos, choirs, clapping, whistling, humming, or snapping, they have automatically pleased God with their singing. This is as **dangerous** as any false teaching ever purported to be. In no instance is 1 Corinthians 10:12 more applicable than to those who might make such a supposition! In rightly avoiding the sins in worship outlined above, one can fall into other snares equally deadly to the individual's soul. Consider the following.

Lethargic participation in the singing is a sin. Christ, in John 4:24, addresses the "attitude" of the worshipper as weightily as He does his "action." How incongruous to apathetically sing of the cross, salvation, Christian duty, praise to God, and concern for other! David urged, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so..." (Psalm 107:2). What impression are visitors given when the participants in the singing are sour-faced, sleepy, and seemingly uncaring? Why not make the effort, every week and with every song, to smile, to give the appearance of genuine joy and enthusiasm, and to make each song an opportunity to edify, encourage, exhort, and teach others? It is sinful to habitually think of other things during the singing. One can engage in the singing audibly, while inwardly giving his heart to grudges, distractions, boredom, resentment toward others, and jealousy. Jesus calls such worshippers hypocrites (Mark 7:6), who having such a disposition are apt to offer God vain worship (Matthew 15:9). The end facing hypocrites is clearly one all would wish to avoid (Matthew 24:51; 1 Timothy 4:2).

While the childhood song would be inappropriate to sing in worship, "If You're Happy And You Know It" strikes at the heart of a divided attention. Who would want to teach their children, "If you're happy and you know it, roll your eyes, yawn incessantly, check your watch, boil over the song leader singing all four verses, sit and pout, mull

Continued on Page 4

MOST OF A MINUTE - ABORTION INCONSISTENCY

A Shelby County grand jury indicted an Alabaster woman, Rosetta Hudson, accusing her of providing crack cocaine to her baby before he was born. According to the Birmingham New, she is the first woman in Alabama to face charges for distributing illegal drugs to a new born baby. Here are the charges against her:

1. Unlawfully furnishing a controlled substance
2. Providing cocaine to a minor
3. Child abuse

This is amazing! Our legal system has again shown gross inconsistency in reference to its position on abor-

tion. Oh, I agree with the charges against Miss Hudson. But how can we charge her with child abuse against her unborn child while the hospital up the street is performing an abortion on another unborn child? If abortion isn't child abuse then nothing is. The silent screams of the unborn babies are unheeded while we vote for people who support it.

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20).

SINS IN OUR SINGING NOBODY TALKS ABOUT, *Continued from Page 3*

over lunch plans, observe what the family in front of you is doing..." Yet, some members occupy their minds with such thoughts throughout the song services in congregations all over the land every Sunday! Would David have thus filled his heart (Psalm 95:6)? What about Isaiah (Isaiah 6:5)? Who can envisage Christ singing with the disciples (Matthew 26:30), but thinking about the trip to the mount of Olives, how Andrew or Bartholomew were singing off key, the weather, or even something so legitimate as His imminent crucifixion? Concentration upon the purposes of corporate singing in the worship is indispensable.

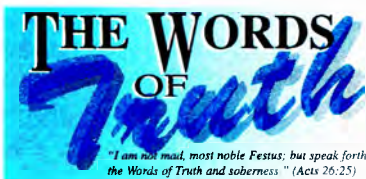
Singing to be heard of men is sinful, based upon a broad principle in Matthew six. As praying to be heard, giving to be seen, or fasting for appearances sake is disgusting to God, is not singing for the approval of others like unto those? In man's feeble opinion, some may make a lovelier sound with their voices than others. But, God looks upon the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). He is not simply listening. He is looking, and examining what is in the heart (cf. Psalm 26:2; Romans 8:27). Is it thought that God disdains the singing of the "tone deaf" and automatically relishes the tones of those who might croon like the angels? God has a much better prospective than the service of one's lips. He "hears" deeper!

Disorderly singing is sinful. Such does not only occur through the actions of charismatic outbursts common to neo-pentecostal settings. What about when a brother or sister tries to speed up or slow down the song leader? Nothing is more distracting and sickening than a strong-voiced member on the pew trying to dictate how "the song should

go." Such subversion makes the use of a song leader redundant, and the result of such audacity is confused brethren, ill-feelings, and a poor reflection of the name of Christ before visitors (cf. 1 Corinthians 14:24,25,33,40). It may very well cause Christians, maybe new Christians, to stumble (cf. Luke 17:1-2). Congregations who would never use a female song leader or song leading teams in essence encourage it when they allow malcontents to get away with leading from their seats in direct competition with the song leader.

While staying away from false teaching which seeks to add to, take away from, or otherwise change the singing commanded by God, let God's people in every place avoid some other, more common sins in this area of worship. Instead of complaining about how the song service may be, work hard to improve it while never contributing to indecency. If every one began today to work to improve the way they sing to God and one another, there would be a noticeable improvement. Try it and see!

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

Vol. 35 No. 8

February 19, 1998

**SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:
MY MENTOR AND FRIEND
THE SWORD
IS EVERYTHING A MAN DOES IN HIS
CHRISTIAN LIFE WORSHIP?
THE WOMAN ACCUSED
OF ADULTERY
SAVED FROM WHAT?
GENTLENESS
WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT
PERSECUTION**

MY MENTOR AND FRIEND: RICHARD MAULDIN

Justin Brasfield

I think I know what Timothy felt when he read the apostle Paul's letters of encouragement to him. I can imagine the smile on his face and the sparkle in his eyes as he read the very first lines of the letter we know as I Timothy: "Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope; unto Timothy, my own son in the faith," (1:1-2).

Many of the readers of the *Words of Truth* know a kind, humble, knowledgeable man named Richard Mauldin. When I was 12, I was blessed with the opportunity of getting to know him. After I met him, it wasn't long before I received a letter from him. This was like no letter I had read before. He wrote about the way to heaven (John 14:6). He wrote about what God has given us (II Peter 1:3). And in the closing of the letter he wrote, "We will study more later on." He was not kidding. Little did I know that in the next few years I was going to receive volumes of scholarly personal epistles. He wrote about what the Bible says about eternal punishment. He poured out 25 pages on the person of Jesus Christ. He continued to emphasize the truth about the true, biblical church (Matthew 16:18). And he never failed to encourage me to "study

to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word truth, (II Timothy 2:15). I forgot to mention that he did all of this while legally blind. Here is a portion of a letter he wrote in 1993;

"My prayer is that I have been a good influence on you. I pray that God's blessings will be with you in all the things that are good and defeat you in the things that are bad...As the apostle Paul called Timothy and Titus his sons in Christ, I would like to remember you as my nephew in Christ. I love you very much. Uncle Dick"

There are many older readers of this fine publication. Thank you for your wisdom. Please continue to share it. And to the younger readers, let's always be receptive to Christian guidance. Think of what an honor it is to have a wise, experienced Christian mentor. What an honor it must have been for Timothy and Titus to have received special encouragement from the apostle Paul. I don't know just how much Paul's letters meant to them, but, I do know how much Uncle Dick's letters mean to me. Thank you, Uncle Dick.

Justin is one of our fine teenagers in the 6th Ave. Church of Christ. JC

THE SWORD

Grace Lowrey

We do not fight with guns and bombs

As in a carnal war.
The Christian's sword, the Word of God,
Is more powerful by far.

It can seal the bonds of tender love.
It can melt the heart of stone.
It can separate us from our sins.
There's no greater weapon

known.

A secret weapon it is not;
But when hidden in the heart
Covered by the shield of faith
Stops Satan's fiery dart.

Some may try to dull it's edge;
Or twist it out of shape.
God will punish those who try.
This, no one can escape.

We must learn how to use this sword.

There's cause to sound alarm.
A weapon handled carelessly
Will cause a lot of harm.

So keep the Christian armour on.
With sword and shield in hand.
Christian soldiers conquer sin
When for the truth they stand.

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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IS EVERYTHING A MAN DOES IN HIS CHRISTIAN LIFE WORSHIP? A Look At Romans 12:1

This title raises an interesting and heavily discussed question, and to answer it one must define what is meant by "worship." The most common word in the New Testament translated "worship" is PROSKUNEO. It is always translated "worship." Thayer defines this word, "To kiss the hand (toward) one, in token of reverence. In the New Testament by kneeling or prostrating to do homage to one or to make obeisance, whether in order to express respect or to make supplication." Out of the 72 times the word worship is found in the King James Translation, 59 of those come from the original word, PROSKUNEO. A clear illustration of the word is found in Matthew 4:9, 10: "...and saith unto Him, All these things will I give thee if thou wilt fall down and worship (PROSKUNEO) me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, thou shalt worship (PROSKUNEO) the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

While PROSKUNEO is the Greek word most commonly found translated "worship," it is not the only word translated "worship." SEBOMAI, occurring ten times, means, "To reverence, hold in awe." While PROSKUNEO emphasizes the outward show of reverence, this word emphasizes the inward feeling of reverence or awe.

LATREUO is sometimes translated "worship." It occurs 21 times, and means, "To render religious services or homage, to worship." It is a broader, more general word than the other two, in that it refers to all of Christian service, not just worship. It is true that all worship is service, but not all service is worship. All that a man does in his Christian walk is service to God and glorifies Him, but not all a man does in that life is worship. LATREUO can be translated "worship" correctly if the context permits the usage.

That brings us to Romans 12:1. Consider three different translations of this verse:

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (King James)

"Therefore I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer yourselves as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - which is your spiritual worship." (New International)

"I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship." (New American Standard)

I have underlined the key words for our consideration. This informative and precious verse describes the Christian lifestyle as a "living sacrifice." That is, all we do in our lives as Christians is in service to our Maker. As Paul wrote later, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (I Corinthians 10:31). The Greek word in question is LATREUO.

Now remember that LATREUO can be translated "service" or "worship," depending on the context. The translators of the KJV believed that to take a context that obviously depicted the whole Christian life and call it worship would contradict what they knew from other passages about the nature of worship. Their translation is the right one. All of Christian living is to the glory and service of God. All of Christian living is not worship.

Read through the Old and New Testaments where worship is discussed, and note the fact that where details are given, worship is punctuated by a beginning and an ending. For example, Abraham said, "I and the lad will go yonder and worship" (Genesis 22:5). The wise men said, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and are come to worship Him" (Matthew 2:2). Paul said, "Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship" (Acts 24:11).

Because worship must be "in the spirit and in truth," (John 4:24), it is important that we understand the difference between Christian service and Christian worship. There are many things which would be suitable for me to do in my private life, which would be wholly inappropriate in worship to God.

MOST OF A MINUTE - THE WOMAN ACCUSED OF ADULTERY

In John 8 of the Bible a woman was brought to Jesus accused of adultery. The accusers were ready to stone her. Jesus said, "Let he who is without sin among you cast the first stone." As you know, they hung their heads and meandered off.

Jesus, observing that the accusers had left said to the woman, "Where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?"

She said, "No man, Lord."

And Jesus said unto her, "Neither do I condemn

thee: go, and sin no more."

Sin? That's right, Jesus called sex outside of marriage "sin". Red or yellow, black or white makes no difference. Fornication is sinful and wrong. While the world around us says in reference to sex outside of marriage "Go for it!", the Creator of our universe still says the same thing in 1 Corinthians 6:18 - "Flee fornication...he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body."

SAVED FROM WHAT?

Johnny Ramsey

Jesus promised salvation to those who believed the gospel and were baptized according to Mark 16:16. Have you ever wondered what it is that we are saved from? Salvation is truly a blessed and joyous relationship. The very word brings happiness to our souls. Some of the finest spiritual songs extol the splendor of redemption. Jesse Pounds wrote these glorious words:

"Soul, a Savior thou art needing
Soul, a Savior waits for Thee
Hear His words of tender pleadings
Hear His gracious, 'Come to me'."

Would it not be tragic indeed if there were no possibility of being saved from this old wicked world? What if the hope of cleansing from sin were absolutely beyond the realm of probability? Without hope and without God in the world (Ephesians 2:11-12) would be our portion here below! An unknown penman challenges our attention with thoughts that bring us face to face with the Man of Calvary:

"I knelt in tears at the feet of Christ,
In the hush of the twilight dim,
And all that I was, or hoped, or sought,
Surrendered unto Him.
Crowned or crucified - my heart shall know
No King, but Christ, who loved me so."

But, what would be our plight if Golgothas had never been? The blood shed at the cross gives us hope for salvation otherwise unobtainable.

Through obedience to the gospel plan of redemption (Romans 6:16-18) we can be saved from sin. The redeemer came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10) and to deliver us from the bondage of death (Hebrews 2:14). He gave himself for the iniquities of the whole world (I John 2:2) and became the One who died for all (II Cor. 5:14). Christ "saves to the uttermost" (Hebrews 7:25) as God's grace is found in Him unto eternal glory (II Tim. 2:10).

"Sing the sweet story, redemption's sweet song;
Over and over the chorus prolong
Shout the glad message and join with the throng,
Ever we will sing praise to the King
Singing redemption's wonderful song."

This is certainly one of brother Teddie's great songs!

Not only does obeying the truth free us from sin it also saves us from being separated from our Maker. Isaiah clearly speaks of the loneliness and sorrow that sin produces in chapters 57 and 59 of his eloquent book. Ultimately, were it not for the sacrifice of Jesus our Lord, we would experience eternal separation from the Creator (Revelation 20:14-15; II Thess. 1:7-9). To be ransomed from a Devil's hell is one of the richest blessings Christianity brings.

We also are saved from Satan's snare when we receive and obey the Holy Scriptures (James 1:21-22). The Tempter desires our condemnation (Luke 22:31) and lays traps to capture our very souls (I Timothy 3:7). He is clever and tenacious and often successful (II Cor. 2:11; 11:3). But, fortunately,

Christ is more powerful (I John 3:8 and 4:4). To be saved from condemnation and darkness through acceptance of the simple way of salvation makes Christianity most appealing (Acts 13:38-39). When we resist the Devil and draw nigh to God this life and the one to come is made more beautiful immediately!

Virgil, who wrote thirty years before Christ, spoke of the hopeless nature of oppressed people when he cogently stated:

"There is but one safe thing for
the vanquished: Not To Hope For Safety!"

Conversely, regardless of external circumstances, servants of the Savior are always victorious and triumphant (II Cor. 2:14). Verily, more than conquerors are we (Romans 8:37).

Christianity also saves us from ourselves. Selfishness cannot dwell where the gospel rules (Luke 9:23). What a blessing it is to be delivered from the ego-centered lifestyle that captivates billions of the earth's dwellers. The elder brother mentality of Luke 15 wherein personal pronouns occupy center-stage is truly a miserable existence. Being redeemed by the blood of Christ (I Peter 1:19) means that we have been saved to serve. This provides meaning, depth and direction to a life previously overwhelmed by shallow, earthly emphasis. When we attempt to guide ourselves we miss so many verdant pastures the Creator would like to show us (Jeremiah 10:23).

Salvation in the Master also delivers us from the vanity of sorry people and places us in the company of the best folk on earth. Will it not be marvelous throughout eternity to be far away from the filth and sordid things of this mundane sphere (Rev. 21:8)? We can have a foretaste of glory divine here and now by walking in the light with saints of God on earth (I John 1:7). The sensuality of our humanistic society is becoming even more debauched and vile. Such evil (I John 5:19) makes good people yearn for a purer environment. Heaven was made for folk who look for better things (Hebrews 11:16; Phil. 3:20-21).

Salvation in Christ also delivers us from the sting of death (I Cor. 15:54-57). From the moment we enter the Lord and thus partake of a quality of life that is of eternal consequence (John 17:3) we eagerly look forward to that place where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary be at rest (Job 3:17). Therefore, when this earth is rolled up like an old garment and cast aside (Hebrews 1; II Peter 3:11) the loyal followers of the Prince of Peace shall know assuredly that salvation in the Lord was truly the pearl of great price.

When the Master promised "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" he opened up vistas of beauty and joy forevermore.

"In the land of fadeless day
Lies the city four-square
It shall never pass away
And there is no night there."

Truly, how marvelous the golden street of glory shall be!

GENTLENESS

Mike Benson

Speaking from personal experience, I know first hand that preachers sometimes get discouraged when church members habitually miss the worship assembly.

Recently I read a story about one particular preacher who had become so disheartened that he asked his secretary to compile a list of *the* ten members who were absent most often. He then asked her to mail each of these folks a copy of their attendance records in addition to a letter of admonition and concern.

After only a few days, the preacher received a letter from a doctor in the congregation. The doctor confessed negligence in his life and even included a generous \$1,000.00 check to cover the contributions that he had missed during his absence. He closed his letter with a promise to be more faithful in the future than he had been in the past. Then at the bottom of the page, the doctor wrote, "P.S. Please tell your secretary that there is only one "t" in *dirty*, and no "c" in *skunk*."

It's difficult to know exactly what to say to a wayward brother, isn't it? There's a fine line between lovingly urging a man to repent and "browbeating" him. Certainly the words "dirty skunk" would not be appropriate, but *something* needs to be said. Something *has* to be said in the interest of his soul (cf. Jas. 5:19,20).

The Bible tells us,

*"Brethren,
if a man is overtaken [caught] in any trespass,
you who are spiritual
restore such a one
IN A SPIRIT OF GENTLENESS..."*
(Gal. 6:1a; cf. Eph. 4:2; Heb. 10:24).

Dear Christian, *what do you need to say today, and to whom do you need to say it?* Think about it.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT PERSECUTION

G.F. Raines

Faithful followers of Christ must walk in the same path of humiliation, reproach, and suffering in which he walked. Paul says: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12).

In the days of the Roman emperor Nero, some of the disciples of Jesus were thrown to wild beasts in the amphitheatres; some were burned alive; many were crucified; others were covered with skins of wild animals and forced into the arena to be mangled by dogs.

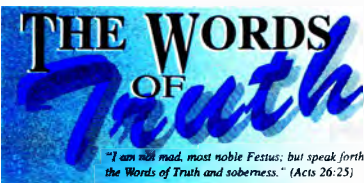
But the Holy Bible comforts all faithful followers of our Lord, saying:

"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. 5:11, 12).

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17).

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6th Avenue Church of Christ
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THE WORDS OF Truth

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)*

Vol. 35 No. 9

February 26, 1998

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:
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SOUL WINNERS EXAMINATION -
TEST YOURSELF

"GOING ON UNTO PERFECTION" (NO. 2)

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

A CONTRAST DRAWN

There is a "going on" that is commanded in this context of Hebrews 6. Many other Scriptures fully re-enforce this healthy concept. Paul wrote the Corinthians and the Romans about leaving babyhood in Christ and growing up in Him relative to the demands of spirituality.

But there is a type of going on or going onward that is soundly and solidly condemned. The apostle John wrote of it in 2 John 9-11 which reads, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." For "transgresseth" in the KJV the ASV has "goeth onward." The person who goes onward has neither the Father nor the Son; he abides not in the doctrine (teaching) of Christ. In the original Greek John used the term *proago* from which we derive progress, progression and progressive. The people about whom John was writing were progressing all right, but their progress was away from Christ and not toward Him. Those who took the church into digression a century ago thought of themselves as being progressive. Those who seek to duplicate the same today view themselves as being up-to-date and very progressive-minded. But just like it was one hundred years ago the current progress by Change Agents is AWAY from Christ and not TOWARD Him!

OUR PROJECTED PLAN OF APPROACH

It will be threefold in development. (1) There is the NEED to go unto perfection. (2) Ways will be suggested how it can be attained and then maintained. (3) The fruits of it will climax our study.

(1) THE NEED TO GO ON UNTO PERFECTION

When Paul wrote this in Hebrews 6:1 he was NOT dealing with optional matters but with matters of obligation. We are commanded to go on unto perfection. It is never right to reject what God has commanded us to do.

This epistle was written during the decade of the A.D.

60's. It was addressed to the people known as Hebrews. Matters discussed in this epistle were very critical and crucial for these fickle church members. They were on a collision course with their souls hanging in the delicate balances. They were on the baneful brink of apostasy from Christ and His church. With longing and envious eyes they were looking back to Moses and Judaism. Moses was not their lawgiver now. Judaism was not God's religion for them now and had not been since it was removed and Christianity was established in its vacant spot. Apostasy could not be arrested unless they pressed on to perfection and kept their eyes firmly riveted on Jesus Christ and His church.

Apostasy is never far removed from any of us. It has become a sad reality among many who formerly were of us but no longer have that status.

We cannot remain static. We either progress spiritually or we retrograde thus losing ground formerly gained. Souls are at stake when we lose ground spiritually.

It is the only way to attain spiritual fullness or Christian maturity.

Other Scriptures re-enforce our need to press on toward perfection (spiritual maturity and completeness in Christ). Some of them are, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect...I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me...Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you...Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: ...Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen...But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (Matthew 5:48; John 17:23; Philippians 3:15; Colossians 1:28; Hebrews 13:21; 1 Peter 5:12).

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
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WHEN SHOULD AN ACTION BE DEFINED SIN?

Sometimes when Christians discuss the matter of using instrumental music in worship today, this opinion will be raised: "While I don't think we should use it, I would not call it a sin. After all, sin is transgression of the law, and since the law of Christ doesn't specifically address the subject, we couldn't really call it sin." Is this valid reasoning? Certainly not! Saint and sinner alike know that there are many matters which are known to be sinful even though they are not specifically mentioned in the Bible. They are sinful because they violate clear Biblical principles.

Is it a sin to sell crack cocaine to school children? We all know it is, and yet the Bible nowhere specifies this sin. To sell cocaine is sin because it transgresses teachings of the Master in Matthew 7:12 to treat others the way we want to be treated. It is sin because of the teaching in Romans 13:1-5 to obey the laws of our land. It is a sin because its use causes a form of drunkenness, and drunkenness is sin (Gal. 5:21). Would any sober minded Christian argue that an action cannot be considered a sin unless it is directly prohibited in the Bible?

Is the use and sale of pornography a sin? We all know it is, and yet the Bible nowhere uses the word "pornography" and specifies its use as sin. To use and distribute pornography is a sin because it is a form of uncleanness and lasciviousness, which will keep people out of heaven, (Gal. 5:19-21).

Is creating the office of the Pope a sin? Yes, it is, but not because the Pope is expressly mentioned or condemned in the Bible. The word itself is not found there. And yet, the Holy Spirit has clearly outlined how the church is to be governed in passages such as Philippians 1:1, I Timothy 3:1-13, and Acts 20:28-29. The very absence of the concept of the papacy in the biblical teaching of church government makes it a sinful practice.

To further demonstrate the point that a matter doesn't necessarily have to be expressly stated in the Bible as sinful for it to be sinful, observe the words, "...and such like..." in Galatians 5:21:

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

The word "such" is the Greek word *toutois*, meaning "these, these things," (Strong's, #5125).

The word "like" is from the Greek word *homoios*, meaning "Like, similar, resembling: i.e. corresponding to a thing," (Strong's, #3664).

In other words, we are here commanded to use our own sense of reasoning to decide what actions fall into the same category as these specified sins. Those actions which are like these will also prevent us from inheriting heaven.

Back to the original point. We must not so quickly shrug off the assertion that the use of instrumental music in worship is a sin with the argument, "The Bible law doesn't expressly mention instrumental music in New Testament worship, and therefore I can't call it a sin to use such." We must rather ask, is the principle taught in John 4:24 and Colossians 3:16-17 violated when we use such music in our worship? If that principle is in fact violated, (and it is), then sin is the correct word to use.

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Colossians 3:16-17).

KNOW

“Can a person really KNOW if he is saved or not? I sometimes have doubts about my salvation...”

This is an important question. Let's go to the Scriptures:

1. A person can KNOW that he is in sin (cf, Rom. 3:23) if he has never obeyed the gospel. *“And to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those **who do not obey the gospel** of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power”* (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

2. A person can KNOW when he has been forgiven of all of his past sins. *“But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness”* (Rom. 6:17-18).

Question: According to the Scriptures, how can a person know that he has been made free from his sins? Note:

The gospel (cf, 1 Cor. 15:1-4) is the **1) death, 2) burial, and 3) resurrection** of Christ.

The person who does not *“obey the gospel”*

(cf, 2 Thess. 1:7-9) will be punished with everlasting destruction (ie, Hell).

But the gospel obviously consists of facts; how does a person go about obeying these facts?

A person obeys *“that form of doctrine”* or a *form* of these facts in order to be saved (cf, Rom. 6:17-18).

What Biblical action serves as a form of the gospel (ie, the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ)? Baptism. *“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death **[#1 death]**? Therefore we were buried with Him **[#2 burial]** through baptism into death, that **JUST AS***

*Christ was raised from the dead **[#3 resurrection]** by the glory of the Father, **EVEN SO WE ALSO** should walk in newness of life”* (Rom. 6:3-4). A person can know that he has been saved from all of his past sins when he has been baptized (Acts 2:37-38).

3. A person can know when he is being cleansed of daily sins.. *“But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin”* (1 Jn. 1:7). As long as you continue to obey Christ (ie, walk in the light), you can be secure in your salvation (cf, 1 Jn. 5:11-13).

Mike Benson
Parsons, Tennessee

MOST OF A MINUTE - WIVES AGAINST ADULTERY

Glenn Colley

We are weeks into the White House scandal, and the matter is still boiling. I am eager for the time that the country can feel more settled about the matter. I think the truth would help that a great deal.

Out of all the different reactions to the president's alleged adultery and lies, the ones which are surprising me the most is from American wives. Mostly silent. Ladies, are you sure you are comfortable with this compromising, relaxed attitude toward adultery? I mean, doesn't it make you a little uneasy to hear your husband say, **“What a man does privately is his**

business. So long as he can do his work, that's all that matters. I think he has women on the side, but I think we ought to just leave him alone about it!”

May I suggest ladies that we need more men--and women--who will keep saying, **“Adultery is and always will be, demoralizing, deceptive, and destructive. And no one will ever convince me differently.”**

Galatians 5:19 still says that adultery is against God and will keep folks out of heaven, and I believe it.

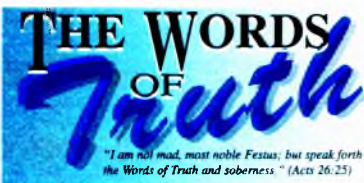
SOUL WINNERS EXAMINATION - TEST YOURSELF

Answer yes or no to each question.

1. I am presently discussing (or have recently discussed) New Testament Christianity with a friend. Yes___No___
2. Within the last 30 days, I have mailed out or given a tract to someone. Yes___No___
3. I have told others how happy I am to be a Christian. Yes___No___
4. I have recently invited others to attend worship with me. Yes___No___
5. I am interested in conducting a home Bible study with a friend. Yes___No___
6. I have visited a newcomer to the congregation. Yes___No___
7. I have brought someone to Bible class. Yes___No___
8. I have called and inquired about a brother or sister who has been absent from Bible classes. Yes___No___
9. I have made it a point to try and encourage a weaker brother or sister who is irregular in attendance. Yes___No___
10. I have a prayer list of those I pray for that they might be saved (or if not a written list, some for whom I regularly pray). Yes___No___
11. I tried diligently to bring others with me to our last Gospel Meeting. Yes___No___
12. I make sure that I give in a sacrificial way from that which I have prospered. Yes___No___
13. I pray for the elders as they plan to accomplish the Lord's will (or for the decisions of the men, if there are no elders). Yes___No___
14. I visit regular those who are in the hospital and in the nursing homes. Yes___No___
15. I check on shut-ins to see if I can help them. Yes___No___
16. I attend regularly every service that is possible for me to attend, even Gospel Meetings, Lectureships or other congregational meetings. Yes___No___
17. I firmly believe that for me to be saved, I must be committed to the saving of other souls as well. Yes___No___

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates" (2 Cor. 13:5)? "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward." (2 John 1:8) We are constantly being tested, therefore we must always be on guard (1 Peter 5:8).

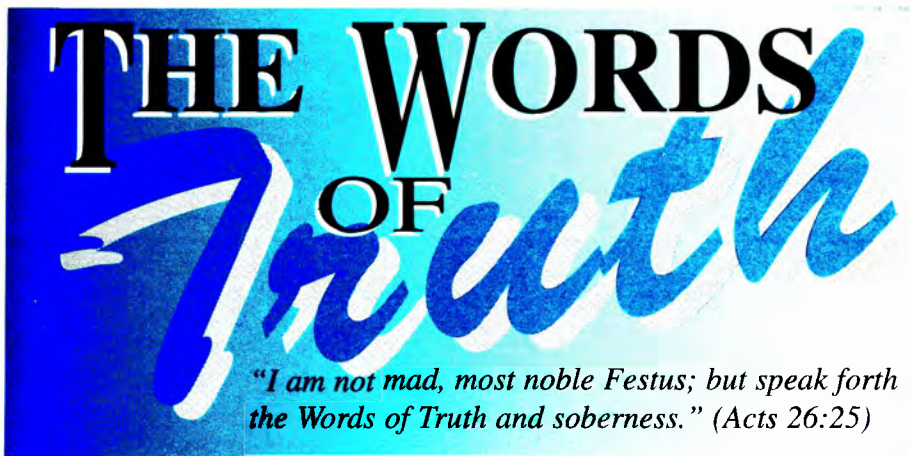
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Vol. 35 No. 10

March 5, 1998

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

MARKS OF A
"GOOD LOCAL WORK"

A PLEA FOR GODLY HOMES

THINGS THAT COUNT

THE GOSPEL

MARKS OF A "GOOD LOCAL WORK"

Neal Pollard

I am no expert, but neither am I short of strong opinions. Growing up the son of a preacher, I have seen and heard of many preachers who were always moving in search of a "good local work." Something was always insufficient, usually either salary or soundness. Sometimes these men had come across congregations that were, spiritually, quite deficient. Sadly, these congregations do exist. Other times, though, the preachers were restless or idealistic.

No cliché is more traveled among gospel preachers than, "there is no perfect church just as there is no perfect preacher." Despite the commonality of this adage, some preachers are modern-day nomads. How can one identify a "good local work." Remembering that every work will have its attending strengths and weaknesses, consider the following qualities.

An Evangelistic Membership. How many Christian brothers and sisters in the congregation are trained, experienced, and desirous of doing personal evangelism, taking seriously the Lord's Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20)? Is the congregation receptive to studies with people of all races, social climates, and educational backgrounds? Do they seem to see the world as a harvest in which they must labor (Matthew 9:37)?

A Spiritual Leadership. Elders are *not* perfect men (cf. Romans 3:23). Every elder is stronger in some areas than others (cf. 1 Timothy 3:1ff; Titus 1:5ff). But, look at the eldership's thrust. Are the men interested in spiritual matters? Are they visiting, encouraging, disciplining, caring, praying, studying, teaching, evangelizing, delegating, trusting, vigilant men? Is their time spent more in financial concerns or spiritual concerns?

Do they support balanced, gospel preaching? Are they safe examples to follow?

A Caring Fellowship. Observe the secret acts of charity and love. When Christian families in the local church regularly, though usually anonymously, buy groceries for families in need, buy presents during the holidays for children who otherwise would not have much, take food to the sick or hurting, make visits, write cards or make phone calls to those suffering and shut-in, such actions act as gauges of a people making effort to please God and imitate Christ. Further, notice how they move to

accept and include new converts or recently-moved Christian families. Though not in spiritual fellowship with them, how do the brethren treat non-Christian visitors to the assembly? Is there a sense that the brethren are letting "brotherly love continue" (Hebrews 13:1), despite the common strains and disagreements that can test a congregation? This is significant.

An Effective Pulpit. Certainly, this does not necessarily mean flowery, "dynamic," or bubbly. While preachers have "bad days on the job," experience discouragement ("blue days"), suffer disappointments by the actions of brethren, may on occasion say something unwise or tactless privately or from the pulpit, certainly none of these should regularly characterize God's preacher. When every day is sour, discouragement cannot be defeated, bitterness is evidenced which is visible to the membership on an ongoing basis, no sermon is complete without mentioning a certain subject, the work quickly ceases to be "a good one." When the pulpit stays silent on the "hard subjects" in interest of job security, caters to the feelings of a segment of the brethren, or either implicitly or explicitly spreads false teaching from that important platform, the church ceases to be a good work directly because of an ineffective pulpit.

Notice that finances were not considered as a component of a "good local work." No doubt, if the preacher faithfully proclaims the word (2 Timothy 4:1-4) and trusts God's ability to sustain His faithful children (Matthew 6:24ff; Psalm 37:25), God will provide his needs. That may mean having a realistic relationship toward material possessions and view of what necessities are. But, it is of serious concern that preachers have made "career moves" based solely or primarily on finances. In a world preaching "upward mobility," the preacher can be tempted to convert.

There will be bad days, hurt feelings, disappointing behavior, stressful situations, apathy, resistance, and heartaches for the preacher. But, the fruits and rewards of being a preacher makes most local works "good." The membership, the leadership, and the fellowship will falter. So will the pulpit. But, patience in teaching and growing can brighten the perspective. May every local church, every member included, work to make the work a good one in God's eyes (1 Timothy 3:15)!

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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Jasper, AL 35501

A PLEA FOR GODLY HOMES - The Late Gus Nichols, 1970

Our Lord Jesus Christ makes it plain that one who puts away his companion, "Except it be for fornication, and shall marry another committeth adultery" (Mat. 19:9; 5:32). As we have abundantly shown before, this is an exception to a rule. The rule was and is, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery: (Mk. 10:11). "Fornication" is the only exception to this rule.

But men will first of all get involved in an adulterous marriage, and then want gospel preachers to pervert the word of the Lord in order to justify them. But no preacher is worth his salt who will not kindly, but plainly, teach the truth on the subject.

Some also offer excuses rather than show respect for the law of Christ. Many of them eventually harden their hearts until they don't care what the Lord said about the matter.

But sin is an awful thing, and adultery is an awful sin. It is no little sin to break up one's home and to totally ignore one's marriage vows. It is no little sin to wreck the life of another, some times the life of an innocent person. One is not innocent who will ignore the law of Christ and begin living as the lower animals, with no thought of guilt. It is no little crime against God and society to dig up little children by the roots, as though they were no more than fruit trees, and move them about until, morally and spiritually, they become so hardened that they become criminals in society.

Our nation is morally rotten, and one of the undeniable proofs is in the fact that about one out of every four couples who get married become divorced. Furthermore, our nation, and especially our State, permits divorce for nearly "every cause". This is still a sign of "the hardness of" hearts and of a full rejection of God and his will (Mat. 19:3-9).

Of course, there are some innocent companions who are victims of circumstances. But usually those thought to be innocent have contributed to the breaking up of the home by divorce.

Many wives who boasted that they were always pure, virtuous and true, may have deliberately rebelled against God's command to submit to their husbands, and really be wives unto their husbands, as in First Corinthians Chapter 7. And, this is sometimes true of husbands. Many innocent companions have been shunned and ignored at home until, in weakness, fornication was thought to be a way of escape. No strong Christian would look elsewhere for love and satisfaction while having the right kind of a companion at home. Still, this is no acceptable excuse for this awful sin. No one should be ignorant and weak enough to allow poverty at home to drive him to theft, or armed robbery.

There is no excuse for sin. It is the worst way out of any difficulty. Instead of settling the problem, sin always aggravates it.

"An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Perhaps in marriage it is worth a ton of cure. What could release our sympathy more than the divorce problems of our day? What is more pitiable than the ship of marriage and home on the rocks of divorce? Who needs more teaching and encouragement than young people whose love has been trampled beneath the iron heel of sin and ignorance?

Forgiveness and reconciliation should be diligently sought in preference to divorce (I Cor. 7:11). Divorce is no cure-all; but is rather a thing to be shunned as we would shun a deadly serpent. Divorce creates more problems than it settles. At least, this is usually the case. Some people rather go to perdition than to humble themselves and say, "I was wrong, and I beg your pardon, and wish to do that which is right about all things. I need you, and need your help. We need each other. And we need each other at our best. Please forgive and forget, and by the grace of God I will do my best to make you as good a companion as possible."

No doubt about it, most homes broken by divorce, go on the rocks because of the sins of the tongue and temper. No home can long maintain a spiritually healthy atmosphere and lovely relationship where red-hot pitch-fork words often are pierced into each other's hearts, with the blood left dripping down upon the ground.

And nagging, carping criticism can soon become intolerable. What else could so effectively convince one that he is tied up in wedlock with a bitter enemy, rather than an ardent lover? A companion may have a thousand notable virtues, but the bitter critic never sees anything but faults and imperfections. This is so manifestly unjust and unfair, that the home goes on the rocks of divorce. Then so often they bring up "fornication" as a skeleton dragged out of the closet, and wish for and demand a divorce on such grounds.

That low, mean thing called jealousy more often breaks up homes than does fornication. They magnify molehills into mountains. Some little imprudence, or slip of the tongue is misinterpreted to mean one is guilty of the awful sin of fornication or adultery. If some bad person made some unbecoming remark, the innocent is made to suffer terrible persecution, and finally the home is broken up. Jealousy is perhaps the meanest thing which ever occupied a human heart. Only the fires of hell itself could bring more agony and pain upon a pure and innocent com-

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A PLEA FOR GODLY HOMES, *continued from page 2*

panion than the hot coals of silly and senseless jealousy.

The only certain and safe course to pursue in order to guarantee the the permanence and peace, the happiness and tranquility of a happy home until death do them part, is for couples to become and be Christians, and be totally committed unto Christ! Any home in which Christ does not live, as an invited and honored guest, may already be heading for the rocks of divorce and destruction.

Yes, Christ is the answer. Political conventions cry out in chat that we need their choice and favorite man for some high office. And this may be true. but what our nation needs is a return unto God and the Bible standard for the home. "We need" JESUS. "We need" CHRIST IN OUR HOMES! "We need" THE BIBLE in our hearts and on our tongues. "We need" to put THE KINGDOM OF GOD first in our hearts, and to make every home in this nation the hub of the wheel of our civilization, the center of our chief concern.

The Lord knows we already have too many lukewarm homes formed and fashioned by the world, and the wisdom

of men. The call of the world is so loud that many cannot hear the call of God to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and build great character in the daily experiences of happy homes, and in the light of the saint's of God shining like a city set on a hill.

God gives us homes and churches of the saints which the united forces of an evil world cannot shake! The foundations are being tried and tested! Standards of truth and right are being crushed and splintered by the stormy winds of evil being hurled by Satanic majesty against what is left of Bible religion, devotion to home and duty, and unto our God who formed this earth to be inhabited. Yes, Dear God help us, and multiply our moral and spiritual forces a million-fold. And, dear Lord help us now, and give us the ears of this generation lest we later cry and labor in a vain attempt to save our homes, our people and our nation from inevitable shame, ruin and destruction! And bless every pure heart which joins in this petition to thy throne of Grace, in Jesus Name! Amen!

THINGS THAT COUNT

Johnny Ramsey

Paul sincerely desired that the Corinthians excel in those matters that really counted (II Cor. 8:7). He sought earnestly their spiritual maturity. To grow up in Christ demands that we put away childish things. It is never easy to go on unto perfection as Hebrews 6:1 instructs. The most distressing matter is to observe folk who by reason of time should be teaching who actually need to be taught (Hebrews 5:12). Some people with brilliant minds do not possess a benevolent spirit. Some live in a big house but they do not have a generous heart. Many carry a rich purse but do not manifest rare concern. Unless we have a proper value system based upon the basic principles of Christianity we will go through life with unbalanced allegiance to those things that really count. Jesus made this very clear in Matthew 6:21

"For, where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

So keen and precious are spiritual values the apostle Paul clearly stated in I Corinthians, chapter six, that it would be far better to be defrauded in carnal concerns than to lose one's influence as a Christian!

What are those matters that truly are valuable that we must always keep before our minds?

I. Using Our Time Wisely:

Some preachers spend far too much time in social visitation to be worth very much in the pulpit. The Lord did not intend that evangelists roam hospital corridors and downtown coffee parlors day after day. It is significant that Paul told Timothy to give attendance to growing spiritually so that proclaiming the Scriptures in depth would profit the kingdom (I Timothy 4; II Timothy 4:1-5). Every Christian should attend to those who are ill - both spiritually and physically - but preachers are not

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MOST OF A MINUTE - THE GOSPEL

Glenn Colley

When we as religious people go about to teach and convert people we need to remember to keep the main thing the main thing. What should we teach people? Jesus settled that in Mark 16:15 when He said, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be condemned."

We ought to preach the gospel.

Now, the Gospel has three facets:

1. Blessings to be enjoyed, Romans 1:16
2. Facts to be believed, I Corinthians 15:1-4
3. And commands to be obeyed,

II Thessalonians 1:7. That's why Jesus included the command of baptism. We cannot be saved w/o obeying the Gospel, and obeying the Gospel includes water baptism. Have you obeyed the Gospel?

THINGS THAT COUNT, *continued from page 3*

supposed to do it all (James 1:27; Hebrews 3:13). Three centuries ago Robert Herrick wisely wrote:

“Gather ye rosebuds while you may
Old time is still a flying
And this same flower that smiles today
Tomorrow will be dying.”

We must put a premium upon the things that count and use wisely the moments God gives us (Eph. 5:16). When, as John Donne wrote in 1600, “my play’s last scene has been appointed, shall I look back with serious regret over wasted opportunities?” Hezekiah had additional years granted unto him but those golden moments were poorly spent (II Kings 20). Let us use each minute to the glory of God and the salvation of souls and the edification of the body of Christ!

II. Contributing Generously To God’s Cause:

In view of many passages, in both Old and New Testaments, I am convinced that no one will be more miserable in the day of Judgment than people who were stingy with the Creator. Robbing our Maker of time, talent and money will catch up with us eventually. Such attitudes and actions also rob us resplendent joys right here on earth. Luke 6:38 tells us of the grand results of generous giving. Matthew 6:33 informs us of blessings that naturally flow into gracious hearts of liberality. We do reap as we sow in the realm of contributions (II Cor. 9:6-11). God truly loves cheerful givers. When it enters into our hearts to give even more than required (II Kings 12:4) we are genuinely and greatly blessed. A penetrating gospel hymn contrasts the benevolent hand of the Lord with our devotion:

“I gave my life for thee What hast thou given for me?”

People who think they have saved money by selfishly holding back from the cause of Christ will realize the folly of such decisions when this earth and all that it holds is dissolved (II

Peter 3:11). The message of Proverbs 11:4 will ring in the ears of the covetous ones:

“Riches profit not in the day of wrath.”

Solomon, Ananias and Sapphira and the rich man of Luke 16 have been telling us this for years!

III. Viewing Death With Optimism:

We live in a morbid society. Nearly one-third of all movies have plots that are pessimistic and fatalistic to the core. It is a reflection upon one’s intelligence to view the grotesque nature of stories that deal with monsters and giant insects that will be in charge of cataclysmic events. Could it be that millions are afraid to face the simple end of all things as depicted in the Bible and therefore they must invent material that is confusing and repulsive? Spectacular scenery and bombastic sound-tracks do not impress the Lord who is in charge of the universe. Only fervent Christians can look forward to death as an angel that transports us near to the heart of God. If we live and die in Christ only good thing await us. Truly, death is swallowed up in victory is the message of the Bible (I Cor. 15:54-58). As John Donne aptly put it years ago so we believe:

“One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
and death shall be no more. Death: Thou shalt die.”

Christians, in vibrant optimism, comfort one another in the surety that when Jesus comes the second time, we shall meet Him in the air (I Thess. 4:13-18). The next to last phrase in the Bible depicts saints who say triumphantly:

“Even so, come Lord Jesus”

These are the things that count. Let us rejoice in them!

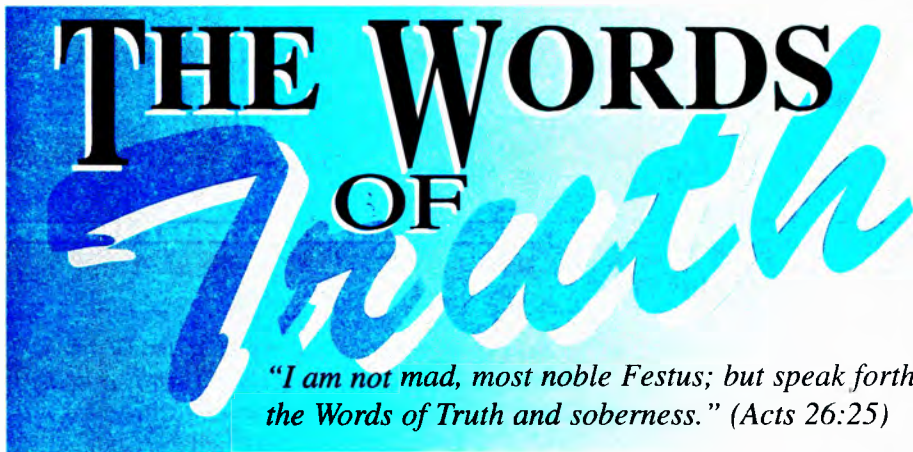
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Vol. 35 No. 11

March 12, 1998

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THEY HAVE CEASED WATCHING

Victor M. Eskew

The office of a bishop is a good work (I Tim. 3:1). It is to be taken only by those of high quality (I Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). The office yields great reward (I Tim. 5:17; I Peter 5:4). It involves the greatest responsibilities (Acts 20:28; Titus 1:9; Heb. 13:17).

Elders are to watch for the souls of the congregation they oversee. This duty is found in Hebrews 13:17.

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief, for that is unprofitable for you.

The soul of every member of the local congregation is to be watched over by the elders. When they stand before the judgment seat of Christ, they will give an account of how well they fulfilled this duty. This is an awesome and fearful task, is it not?

Sadly, many elderships have ceased watching. Members involve themselves in all manner of sinful practices, and elders say nothing. False teaching spews from the pulpit and classroom and is overlooked. Individuals leave the fold, and we make no effort to bring them back.

The situation is like the one which developed in Ezekiel's day:

And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them. Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds: Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost: but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there

is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them (Ezek. 34:1-6).

Several reasons might be given why elders have ceased watching for the souls of the members of their congregations.

One of these is **fear**. They fear the reaction of the sheep if they faithfully practice their responsibility. They will be ridiculed and charged with meddling. They will be shunned and avoided.

Another reason they have ceased watching is **indifference**. They do not care that Satan devours members. Their only concern is meeting the budget each week.

Another reason they fail is the **overwhelming magnitude of their task**. They look and see tens and hundreds who are their responsibility. To do their job properly would require hour after hour, day after day of energy-draining, heart-rending work. Rather than make the effort to begin, they push their responsibility aside.

If elders would faithfully discharge their responsibility, they could drastically change the present course of the church. Sin in the lives of members would decrease. Church attendance and contributions would increase. The office of a bishop would be looked upon with respect and honor, as it should be.

Elders, remember you will give an account of your faithfulness to your duties. May God not say of you, what God said of the shepherds of Israel: "Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand..." (Ezek. 34:10).

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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THE IMMODESTLY DRESSED WOMAN

As a preacher of the good news this subject always makes me sad. I wish it never had to be discussed. It is sometimes embarrassing to the one teaching, and to the hearers. It sometimes evokes anger among hearers who like to dress immodestly, and they feel they are being insulted. They hastily make arguments which skirt (pardon the pun) around the real issues. But it must be discussed. Whether or not we admit it, the woman of the church who goes in public scantily clad in short shorts or short skirts or low cut blouses or too-tight clothes, is doing something that's inherently wrong. She's taking the total picture of man, woman, husband, wife, and distorting it. She, perhaps unknowingly, takes the sexual impulses designed by God to draw husbands and wives closer together, and allows them to be cheapened.

God didn't accidentally design women the way He did. There is as much careful purpose in Eve as there is in the starry sky or in the delicate balance of the animal kingdom. God incorporated into this man called Adam, and into all his sons forever, the attraction to woman. Why? "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Gen. 2:24,25). The reason man is sexually impressed by, and attracted to woman is because of God's design.

But God does not mean for the purpose of this attraction to be distorted or misused. Jesus said, "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:28).

Note the difference between the physical attraction of a husband and wife, and that of a man who is physically attracted to a stranger on the beach, or at the pool, or at the mall. Of one He says, "Let thy fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving deer and graceful doe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou enraptured always with her love" (Prov. 5:18,19). Of the other He says, "Who so looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:28).

Although some might quietly rationalize to themselves, "Well, so long as nothing physical happens, nothing wrong has been done." Yet, the Book of Christians says different. God is not only concerned with our overt actions, but also with our hearts (Matt. 5:28).

A Christian woman will be concerned about the effect she may potentially have on the hearts of the men about her. She didn't create the physical, visual attraction, but she accepts its presence. She may not even understand it's strength, but she accepts its strength.

In I Timothy 2:9-11, Paul discusses women and their dress. He puts as their objective when they dress themselves, that they would appear as "women professing godliness" (I Tim. 2:10).

With this in mind he says, "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array" (I Tim. 2:9).

The term "modest apparel" uses the word modest in a way

different from that to which we are accustomed. It literally means "that which does not call undue attention to one's self". It is more in line with what we think about when we consider a "modest" house, or a "modest" car. From this teaching the Christian woman would not be prohibited from wearing pretty clothes, but would be prohibited from wearing the outlandish. This would hold true for whatever culture or century the woman happened to occupy. This word would also forbid her from wearing that which drew undue attention to her because so much skin was being exposed.

Now consider "shamefacedness". It literally means that women are to have a sense of shame, a natural sense of embarrassment with regard to being ill-clad before men to whom they aren't married. It is shamefacedness which makes a woman blush and take cover when a closed door is accidentally opened at an *inopportune* time. The problem some women in the church have is that they have been conditioned to believe that since the Bible doesn't draw specific lines of "too short" or "too low" that they are free to wear what immoral women wear. They can *pretend* that men have seen so many bathing suits, or so many short shorts, or so many tight clothes that they don't notice, and therefore this discussion is reduced to what the woman *prefers* to wear for comfort or the accepted style of the setting. That pretending is childish and foolish. A woman who believes that needs to ask her husband the truth. Then he should *tell* her the truth. She needs to ask herself why pornographic magazines make millions. She needs to ask herself why everything from fast cars to soft drinks are sold with pictures of sexy young women. She needs to consider what she knows about her own husband. Then she needs to re-think what she wears in view of others.

The next word in I Timothy 2:9 is "sobriety". One version translates this "with...propriety", another says "with...good sense." This clearly implies that there are important things a woman must consider when she decides what to wear. By connecting this to "shamefacedness" Paul tells us the sense in which he is discussing dressing with sobriety or propriety. It is with regard to those things which are, or should be, embarrassing to the woman professing godliness. When she dresses, she has a choice of dressing in a way which reflects sober thinking, or in a way which reflects a *lack* of sober thinking.

Romans 12:2 says, "Be not conformed to this world..." Daddy, are you passively sitting by while your teen-age daughter is leaving the house in clothing that shows too much? Are you acting blind in order to please her preferences instead of standing for what you know is true? It is amazing that daddies and husbands *know* what they know, and still remain silent on this subject in their house. Mothers, your daughters will be respected more by their boyfriends if they dress modestly, and you *want* them to be respected.

There are beaches which are private. There are pools with fences and privacy. There are clothes which are airy and yet not immodest. We *can* dress modestly if we want to, and suffer little for it. Or saying it another way, we *can* dress in such a way that God will not be ashamed of us.

“GOING ON UNTO PERFECTION” (No. 3)

Robert R. Taylor

WISE WAYS TO ATTAIN PERFECTION AND THEN MAINTAIN IT

(1) We need to go on unto perfection in knowledge. This is surely fundamental in pressing on unto perfection. The founding father and former editor of Words of Truth, brother Gus Nichols, once said in a gospel meeting, “The damning sin of our time is ignorance of the Bible.” Brother Nichols knew that this becomes a taproot from which so many other sins spring with ease. He made this statement more than forty years ago. What would the illustrious Nichols say were he still alive and surveying current conditions of our society and of even the church itself? In Hosea’s day the Northern Kingdom was destroyed because of a lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:1-6). Isaiah, prophet of Jerusalem and Judah to the south, wrote, “Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge:...(Isaiah 5:13). Sadducees in Christ’s day erred, and erred greatly, because they knew neither the Scriptures nor the power of God (Matthew 22:29). Paul severely chided the dense Corinthians because some of them were minus knowledge of God; he classed such as shameful on their part (1 Corinthians 15:34).

In Hebrews 5:11, the very context from which our text of study is derived, Paul chided the Hebrews due to their dullness of hearing or their deficiency of knowledge. He desired to discuss with them in this literary letter some deep things about the priesthood of Christ and yet found it difficult to do so due tho their obvious lack of workable knowledge. Growing out of this will be his straightforward sentiments expressed in Hebrews 5:12-14 and 6:1-3. Ignorance of God’s Word was not becoming to these people. No doubt it contributed to the brink of apostasy on which they stood so perilously. A lack of Biblical knowledge is surely a serious malady among us.

Peter had much to say about knowledge. Knowledge is the keynote of his second epistle. He used the word know, or a derivative, some sixteen times in these three chapters and sixty-one verses. Knowledge is to be added as per 2 Peter 1:6. It is something in which we are to

grow as per 2 Peter 3:18. Truth should be the pearl of great price to every saint of the most high God. Acquiring a knowledge of saving truth should be a prime priority to each one of us--no exceptions!

(2) We need desperately to go on unto perfection in faith. Minus it we cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6). Rebellious Israel fell far short of earthly Canaan due to their unbelief. Hebrews 3 spells this out in definitive detail. This chapter closes with the words, “So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief (v. 19). In Hebrews 12:1 Paul wrote, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,...” How should the sin that does so easily beset us be identified? There seems to be NO doubt but what the context of the whole epistle answers with force and finality, unbelief. Lack of faith in God, in Christ, the Bible in general and the gospel in particular made them especially vulnerable for the tug of Judaism propagated by the adamant Judaizers.

The night of His betrayal and just hours before the ordeal of Calvary hit Him with fullness of force Jesus gave four directives to the eleven apostles--belief in Christ, belief in the rich reality of His second coming and belief in heaven as the ultimate of their hallowed hope (John 14:1-3).

While Jesus was here on earth He met NO faith, LITTLE faith and GREAT faith on the part of people. He was signally displeased with the former two and greatly pleased with the latter one as seen in Matthew 15:28 and Luke 7:9.

Victorious faith is expressed eloquently and excellently by lovable and faithful John, “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God” (1 John 5:4,5).

Knowledge and faith should be on the front burner in our going on unto perfection. These are sure and solid ways of attaining and then maintaining this progressing perfection.

MOST OF A MINUTE - BIBLE OLYMPICS

Glenn Colley

Have you been keeping up with the Winter Olympics? Pretty exciting. Take the figure skating competition for example. The quad jump is the big question this year. A decade ago Kut Browning of Canada did it first and sort of set a standard for others to follow. Some said that quad jump would determine who would win the gold.

Did you know the Bible sometimes speaks in Olympic-type language? Of course the trophy for the winner isn’t a gold metal but a crown of life in heaven. Listen to the Lord’s Olympics as observed by the

apostle Paul in Philippians 3:13-14: “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

There’s one big difference between a gold metal and a home in heaven. That gold metal in figure skating can only go to one. That home in heaven will go to as many as finish life’s race as faithful a Christian. Won’t you join the race with us?

MUTUAL LOVE

written in 1959 - Gus Nichols (1892-1975)

I love you! I love you because your very heart is so much like my own, that my greatest need and joy in life is to have you ever by my side.

I love you because your very presence makes me happy, and your voice, to my ear, is sweeter than the melody of song or the music of the violin.

I love you because your high ideals match, and even surpass, my own. You have been able to reach down deep into my heart, and discover lovely virtues which no other looked quite deep enough to find.

I love you because you are the inspiration which I need, and because your countenance drives away darkness as the glowing light of the morning sun.

I love you because you have a sympathetic understanding of all my weaknesses; and yet, you love me -- despite them all! Your love for me is cherished far above all earth's silver and gold!

I love you because you have already made me very happy, and enriched my soul, with a joy which only YOU can impart. And you have done it without an effort--without a word--by simply being yourself. Your natural goodness, and lovely spirit, have been more than enough for the longings of my heart, for someone who could fill it and bless it with a fragrance of love divine.

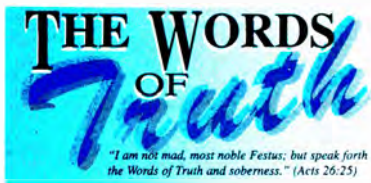
I love you now more than ever before, because I'm now to take you to be with me, and to be mine--to live in my heart and in my life--to be a part of me and all that I am or ever shall become--as long as we both shall live in this beautiful, wonderful world.

In a word, I love you because you are YOU! --And because God drew us to each other, and brought us to this hour, and to this altar, where we, like two rippling rivers, are to become united and submerged, each losing itself in the other--to ever afterward flow on together toward a silvery sea of a glorious eternity.

We're now to become "one flesh," one heart, and one soul, with the stream of our life ever deepening and widening to the enrichment of that nobler life which we--together!--are to make more abundant and sweet for ourselves.

Only God can know all the reasons why I love you! But since you are giving me the rest of your life, may I just say now, with all my heart: "I love you!" --and then spend the rest of my life proving I do.

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)*

Vol. 35 No. 12

March 19, 1998

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:
GOING ON UNTO PERFECTION
(No. 6)
RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE BIBLE
KEEPING MY WORD WHEN IT
HURTS
TRY BEGINNING AGAIN
THOUGHTS CONCERNING
SYMPATHY
ALWAYS ALERT

GOING ON UNTO PERFECTION (No. 6)

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

Again, I pick up in the numbering and noting of wonderfully fine ways in which we may and should go on unto perfection or spiritual maturity.

(7) It is intently imperative that we go on unto perfection in soul winning. Both testaments attest to its great value. We read from Solomon, Wisest of the Ages, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30). Daniel, a prophet to both Chaldean and Persian rulers, expressed the matter in these moving words, "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3).

Jesus Christ came as soul winner. The Messianic mission is stressed beautifully in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Very early in His ministry He began to surround Himself with disciples. In the calling of Andrew and Philip in John One each sought to bring another to the emerging Messiah from Nazareth. Andrew brought his brother Simon to Jesus in John 1:40-42. Philip brought Nathanael and Jesus together in John 1:43ff. In Matthew 4 and Mark One we have the two sets of brothers--Andrew and Simon Peter and James and John--called into a more concerted type of discipleship. Of the four He faithfully promised to make "fishers of men" out of them. No longer would they cast their nets into the Galilean Sea in quest of fish but soon they would take the gospel net and cast it into the sea of humanity fishing for souls.

The unnamed woman in John 4 at Jacob's well met Jesus and soon became a fervent soul winner in His behalf. She went into the city and urged her Samaritan peers to come and see the one who told her all things that ever she had done. As a result many took her soul-winning counsel and went to see and hear Jesus Christ for themselves. The quest for souls in Samaria's land was eminently successful the two days He lingered there.

(8) There are momentous reasons for going on unto perfection in preparation for the coming of death,

final judgment and eternity itself. Amos charged his people in Amos 4:12, "Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." In Hebrews 9:27 we are told, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Life is so very brittle; it can end when least expected and when little or no preparation has been made to meet the Pale Horse and his rider Death. Our destiny is sealed at death. There will be no opportunity to obey the gospel on the other side of death. Our probationary period ends when our final breath is drawn. Putting on a back burner this preparation is lethal indeed. Procrastination has always been the thief of souls.

FRUITS OF GOING ON UNTO PERFECTION

Many could be listed but I choose to number and note just four. No doubt you will want to list some of your own.

(1) There is divine approval. God, Christ and the Holy Spirit are all pleased immeasurably. This but means we are living, to the best of our ability, to what they have mapped out for us in spiritual growth and development.

(2) Personal satisfaction is achieved. We can close each day with the feeling we have grown more like Christ. We can pillow our heads each night without an uneasy conscience constantly prodding us.

(3) This is a tried and tested way to strengthen marriages, homes, congregations and personal relationships.

(4) Another fruit is vital to our eternal interests. It will enable us to be ready to meet the Lord when He comes or when death strikes. We know not the hour when either of these sobering realities could come.

CONCLUSION

The original recipients of this wonderful treatise of truth needed these ardent admonitions, these excellent exhortations, and we need them no less in our era.

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
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RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE BIBLE

How important is it that we divide the Bible in the right way? Second Timothy two verse fifteen says, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Consider some of the ways we must correctly divide the Bible and some problems if we do not.

We must divide the Bible in reference to the Old and New Testaments. The Old law, or covenant, was given to the Israelites.

"And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, *even us*, who *are* all of us here alive this day" (Deuteronomy 5:13).

However, that law has filled its mission and has been done away with.

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, *And* not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God" (Colossians 2:8-19).

That old Law lasted until Christ went to the cross. We cannot today please God by keeping the commands of that Law (Gal. 5:2-4; Gal. 1:13-14). We are under the Law of Christ today (Gal. 6:2).

This division of the Bible is never more important than when trying to sort out different churches teachings on what a man today must do to be saved. Suppose someone suggested to you that to be saved one must pray the sinner's prayer found in Luke 18:9-14. Could you answer him with the truth? Suppose someone claimed that we should be saved today like the thief on the cross. Would you know what to say?

It is true that a man prayed in Luke 18:9-14, and it is true that he prayed these words: "God be merciful to me a sinner." And yet, when people are being encouraged to become Christians using this verse, the teacher is failing to rightly divide God's word. The man who prayed this prayer was a publican who lived (and perhaps died) before the death of Jesus. He lived under the Old Testament. He wasn't trying to become a Christian with this prayer, for there were no Christians at the time. He wasn't trying to have his sins washed away with Christ's blood, for Jesus had not died. He wasn't trying to obey the Law of Christ, for that law (under which we live today) was not yet in effect. People today are in error who teach that people should pray this prayer for salvation today. They fail to rightly divide the word.

Consider also the thief on the cross. Often preachers today will hold the thief's case as an example of how people can be saved today without baptism. They assert, "The thief was saved without being baptized, so can we." The error in such reasoning is in a failure to rightly divide the word of God. Remember that the thief had this conversation with our Lord before the Lord died. Therefore, these statements were made in the context of that Old Law, not the New Law under which we live. While the thief went to paradise without being baptized (unless he was earlier baptized with John's baptism) he was taken to paradise without some other things too. Can we be saved without these things? He was saved without being a member of Christ's church, because the church wasn't established until Acts two. Can we? He was saved without the death of Jesus, because when Jesus declared his paradise destination, Jesus had not died. Can we? He was saved without believing in the resurrection of the dead. In fact, he was dead before Jesus rose from the dead. Can we be saved today without believing in the resurrection? In I Corinthians 15:1-5 the apostle Paul makes it clear that the gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. In verse two he says we are saved by that Gospel. The thief was not.

Do you see? The importance of rightly dividing the word is huge. Rightly dividing the Bible is what makes us know that we are not personally commanded to build an ark; that we are not to offer animal sacrifices today; and that we cannot be saved as were the people who were responsible to the Old Law.

TRY BEGINNING AGAIN

Gus Nichols

Perhaps some reader has tried to be a Christian, but failed. If so, why not try again? Great success does not always come from a single effort. Worthwhile things are worth trying and striving for, even if we must try again and again. In the year 1917 a tornado destroyed our home, blew us away and ruined our crops on a farm before it tore into Carbon Hill, Alabama and left the dead and homeless in its wake. But we did not give up and quit. The next spring we found ourselves planting again, and soon we were growing a crop.

Life is very much like that. Wars are not usually won by a single battle. But battle after battle must be fought before the victory is won. In a way, some of these battles are lost, but victory belongs to those who win the last battle.

One young man started to fight the cigarette habit but soon felt that the weed had him conquered. However, he decided that no man is licked who will keep on trying, again and again. So he summoned all his forces and marshalled them against his dangerous habit.

A day at a time he vowed to his friends and to God that he would not smoke that day, regardless of what happened. Soon he had conquered a habit which is the master of millions of people in our land.

Very few spend a long life in the service of Christ without ever getting discouraged and, for the moment, feel like giving up in despair. But those who overcome the world are they who (if need be) try again and again; who refuse to surrender to the evil one. If they fail, they go down fighting, soon to rise again.

It is easy to give up and quit when the going gets rough, as it most certainly will, sooner or later. Long roads usually have some detours and rough places over which one must travel in order to reach the desired destination.

The Christian is running a race (Heb. 12:1,2; I Cor. 9:25,27). If one falls he should get up and try again. The new birth is a sort of "land of beginning again" (Jno. 3:5; I Pet. 1:22,23). So is a restoration of an erring child of God (Gal. 6:1; Jas. 5:19,20).

THOUGHTS CONCERNING SYMPATHY

G.F. Raines

Dr. Arthur I. Gates in his book Educational Psychology says:

"Sympathy the human species universally craves. The child eagerly displays his injury: or even inflicts a cut or bruise in order to reap abundant sympathy. For the same purpose adults...show their bruises, relate their accidents, illnesses, especially details of surgical operations. 'Self-pity' for misfortunes real or imaginary is, in some measure, practically a universal practice."

No person in history has ever been as genuinely sympathetic as Jesus of Nazareth; and Paul says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5).

"To him that is afflicted pity should be shewed from his friend" (Job 6:14).

"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (Rom. 12:15).

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Cor. 1:3,4).

Someone has well said: "The heart that has passed through the deep waters of tribulation is the most tender; the voice that has cried with pain is the most gentle; the hand that has suffered is the most soothing ministrant in the chamber of sorrow. The best sympathizer is the one who has partaken of the same suffering."

MOST OF A MINUTE - KEEPING MY WORD WHEN IT HURTS

Glenn Colley

This week I've been studying the fifteenth Psalm with great pleasure. The passage begins, "Lord, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?" In other words, who will get to be in heaven one day? One in this list of characteristics is this: "He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not." Listen, you and I need to cement this principle to our characters with permanent glue! It means that when I give my word to do something, because I believe it will be to my advantage, and then later learn that it will not profit me, I must *still* keep my word.

A man has a used car for sale in his yard. Someone comes by, looks it over, and makes him an offer, which he agrees to accept. The buyer will come pick up the car that evening. An hour later, another man makes an offer on that car--three hundred dollars higher--so the car is sold to him instead. Now that's more profitable, but it's also dishonest.

Today let's decide that we will keep our word, even when we learn that doing so will not be as profitable as we thought.

ALWAYS ALERT

Johnny Ramsey

Christians are told to beware of false teachers in Colossians 2:8. We are reminded to be always on guard lest Satan gain an advantage over us (2 Corinthians 2:11). When teachers of error surround us we must use the sword of the Spirit, the Bible, to offset their nebulous doctrines (Ephesians 6:17). A failure to be able to stop Satan's schemes will lead to ultimate ruin on Judgment Day (Revelation 6:17). It will not fare well for those who fail to stand up for Truth while evil men spread error and disdain for righteousness (2 Timothy 3:13). We must test all teachings with Scripture and follow only those matters that can be verified (Acts 17:11).

We must always be alert to the divine maxim that men reap what they sow (Hosea 8:7). We cannot expect good results from evil plans (Romans 3:8). Eventually our sins will find us out as Numbers 32:23 declares. There is no way to have a bright future as long as we live in sensual pleasure and diabolical endeavor. We, therefore should embellish the fruit of spirituality day by day.

Serving the Lord without distraction will grant us joy and peace now and the hope of a brighter existence on a golden street in glory. Right now, on earth, devoted Christians have a foretaste of things divine.

On Lord, how manifold are thy works!
in wisdom hast thou made them all:
the earth is full of thy riches.

Psalm 104:24

May we be wise enough to always alert ourselves to the challenges and opportunities of Christianity. Sometimes we tend to forget that followers of Jesus have responsibilities that cannot be denied or transferred to others. Denial of self and sacrificial surrender makes us better people and happier pilgrims in the midst of a society that has become thoroughly hedonistic. Those things that pander to the flesh

have overwhelmed the majority of earth's billions. Little room for God or time for the soul can be found in the lives of many. Surely, we, as Christians, can show a calmer, better and more productive emphasis.

The night is far spent, the
day is at hand: let us therefore
cast off the works of darkness, and
let us put on the armour of light.

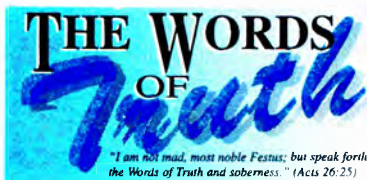
Romans 13:12

Children of God must ever be alert in the use of our talents if the religion of the Savior is extended in a world gone mad over secular enterprise. Long after the last ball game is over and the crass entertainment craze has turned out the lights, we surely have something far better to pursue. Giving is the heart of the gospel and genuine love the motivating factor on earth. To get caught up in futile manners and shallow dreams will result in an eternity of regret. A wise Christian never forgets his duty toward Creator and creature.

What I save I lost
What I spent I used
What I gave I have

May we have alert minds always to realize how short life is (Psalms 144:4) and thus spend time wisely in the pursuit of holiness and virtue. To wander aimlessly through our days, squandering our privileges and wasting our potential, will be a deep regret when we stand before our maker in the final hour. Conversely, to have used our moments to glorify the Lord will grant us satisfaction and joy in the sweet bye and bye.

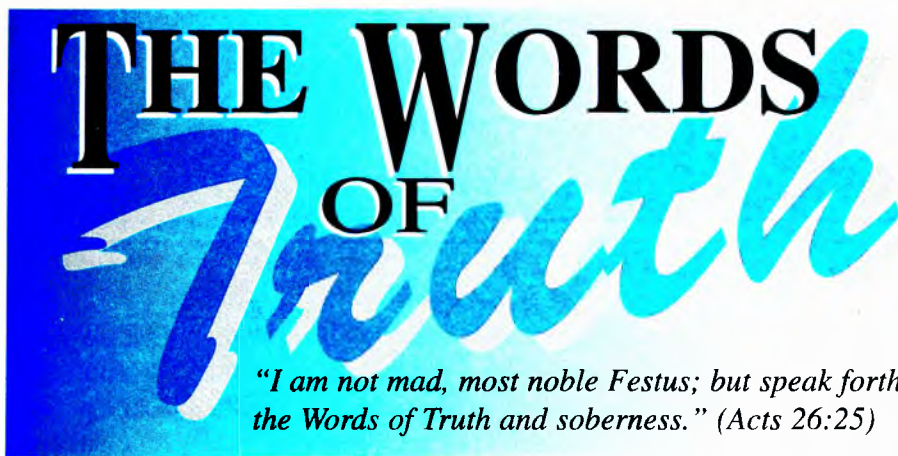
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THE LOVE OF JESUS
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VALUE OF CHRISTIAN MAGAZINES

By J.C. Choate • P.O. Box 72 • Winona, MS 38967 • (601) 283-1192

We are so blessed in our country, yet we take so much for granted. For example, how many of us receive one or more of the magazines that are published by our brethren? How many of us read the ones we get? The fact is, there are enough of us over the land that we can stay in contact with each other, help one another, and work together to the point that we do not feel the great need for literature of any kind. If we do have a need, then, of course, it also is always met. But how about the rest of the world, where there are only a few congregations and where individual Christians may find themselves isolated from their brethren? What about those countries where there are so few missionaries and not enough local preachers to work with the congregations? It is in places like these that Christian literature, and especially a good monthly magazine, can make all of the difference. Such a magazine makes it possible to stay in contact with these brethren, to keep feeding them basic Bible teaching that will sustain them, strengthen them, and help them to hold on until they are stronger or until a preacher can be sent to them.

The longer I serve the lord in foreign fields the more convinced I am of the great importance of using monthly magazines to put materials into the hands of local people on a regular basis. Whether it is sent to a Christian, or to one who is not a Christian, it is going to bear fruit in time. Not only will the individual who receives it be helped, but also his family, relatives, friends, and any others who frequent his home may come across the magazine and be influenced by it. Not only so, but the magazine may continue in that home for years or be taken elsewhere and it may go on influencing any and all who read it. Now where else could you find such a bargain?

I have visited countries like Korea, Philippines, Indonesia, Ghana, and many others and I have found that a good Christian magazine going out month after month, would do wonders in those countries. Again, in all of those places there are not enough workers to

stay in contact with the scattered Christians. As a result, they are left to themselves for the most part and over a period of time they either die spiritually or they drift into error on various points. In recent times some of the congregations in Korea have brought mechanical music into their worship. Others have accepted the title of Pastor for their preacher. In other nations, brethren have gone off after these things or other false teachings, whether it be belief in miracles, speaking in tongues, the one-cup question, having fellowship with denominational churches, or other such things. But the sad part is that many of these congregations and individual Christians could have been spared this if only they had been fed on a regular basis with sound Christian literature.

In third world countries, in particular, we have a number of things going for us. In the first place, the people as a whole are starved for reading materials. Many of them will read anything they can get their hands on. Why not move in and print literature that will be good and wholesome, that will teach them of Christ, and will seek to influence them to become believers in Him and to encourage them to obey His teachings. The printing presses are wide open for these purposes and prices in most cases are very reasonable. Most of these countries also have a good postal system, where postage is inexpensive on the local level, and where a monthly magazine, Bible correspondence courses, tracts, books, etc., can be sent all over the country and into neighboring countries. In some places a postal permit can be obtained that enables this literature to be sent out at even lower rates.

Brethren, help us to use these methods to evangelize the world. The time is right, the opportunity is there, and the church has the resources if we will only use them. There is nothing to stop us but ourselves. How our hearts bleed to see all of those needs, these opportunities, and to see the little that is being done to take advantage of them. Surely the Lord will not be patient with us forever.

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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Polycarp

"Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). How often have you heard those words from the pulpit? Yet, do you know the context? The quote comes from Revelation two in which Jesus is critiquing the church of Christ at Smyrna. To be faithful "unto death" means to be faithful even while facing death at the hands of persecutors. And these Christians knew about such death. The historian Eusebius gives us graphic descriptions of the horrors of persecution dealt to our brothers and sisters long ago:

"...those standing around were struck with amazement, at seeing them lacerated with scourges to their very blood and arteries, so that now the flesh concealed in the very inmost parts of the body, bowels themselves were exposed to view. Then they were laid upon conch shells from the sea, and on sharp heads and points of spears on the ground, and after passing through every kind of punishment and torment, were at last thrown as food to wild beasts."

It was at Smyrna that we find an early Christian called Polycarp. History records him in his last few days moving from the home of one friend to the another, avoiding the bloodthirsty authorities. He knew it wouldn't be long before his capture, and spent his time engaged in nothing but constant prayer to the Lord. Soon the pursuers found him. They had caught two boys and scourged one to make him direct them to Polycarp.

When he was carried into the city he was met by Herod, who was the irenarch, and his father Nicetes, who, taking him into their carriage, persuaded him to take a seat with them. "For what harm," they asked, "is there in saying 'Lord Caesar,' and to sacrifice, and to save your life?" He kindly refused to call Caesar "Lord." His Lord was Christ. He was taken to the stadium

wherein Christians were often brutally slain. Still the enemies of Christ plead with the old man. "Have a regard for your age! Swear by the genius of Caesar. Repent; say, 'Away with those that deny the gods!'"

But Polycarp, with a countenance grave and serious, and contemplating the whole multitude that were collected in the stadium, beckoned with his hand to them, and with a sigh he looked up to heaven, and said, "Away with the impious."

The governor persisted and urged him: "Swear, and I will dismiss you! Revile Christ!"

Polycarp replied, "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and he never did me wrong; and how can I now blaspheme my King that has saved me?" He continued, "If you are so vain as to think that I should swear by the genius of Caesar, as to say, pretending not to know who I am, hear my free confession. I am a Christian." History records, "The crowd, however, forthwith, collected wood and straw from the shops and baths, especially the Jews, as usual, freely offering their services for this purpose." He was bound to the stake. He prayed aloud, and the executioners kindled the fire.

Thus perished the brave and dedicated Polycarp along with others that caused Smyrna to be known as the suffering church (Rev. 2:8-11).

Although we live in a different time and place, one in which we enjoy religious freedom free from such sinful persecution, we must maintain the same dedication of heart. May we all love Christ and His church every whit as much as the martyrs of the first century.

(Sources: *The Seven Churches of Asia Minor*, by J. T. Marlin, Williams Printing Company, Nashville, TN. And *All the Last Words of Saints and Sinners*, by Herbert Lockyer, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan)

MOST OF A MINUTE - Worship Which Pleases God

Glenn Colley

The fact that men in almost every culture worship something is very interesting. We have an instinctive knowledge that there is someone higher than we who we should serve. Yet most have never really considered the key to really pleasing God in worship. It was first shown in Genesis four when Cain and Abel offered their sacrifice to God. They worshiped the same Jehovah. They both sacrificed. And yet God was pleased with Abel's worship and not with Cain's worship. God pleads with Cain, "If

thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted?" The point is, Cain knew exactly how God wanted to be worshiped, but that worship didn't please Cain. So Cain worships according to his own preferences.

Guard against this folks. It put Cain at odds with the Almighty, and it will do the same to us. Jesus taught us, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

EL NIÑO

Chuck Webster

Kentucky endures its worst snowstorm ever...California suffers through storm after storm...Dozens of Indonesians die because of a lack of clean water...Some 60,000 Chileans are homeless because of floods and landslides...What's the cause of all this meteorological mayhem? It's El Niño, scientists tell us. About every two to seven years, a vast swath of warm water--the current stretch is about one and a half times the size of the continental United States, or roughly the size of Europe--appears off the coast of Peru, leading to big changes in the world's weather. Because this ocean-warming phenomenon has usually appeared around Christmas time since the sixteenth century, Peruvian fishermen long ago named it El Niño, or "boy child," a reference to the infant Jesus.

It's interesting that about everything that has happened in the weather lately has been blamed on El Niño. It's also interesting that the birth of the real "El Niño" about 2,000 years ago has influenced the world in much more significant ways. Consider this: though He taught for only a little over three years, the world still uses His life as a reference point in its dating system. He wrote no books, yet entire libraries would find it difficult to hold every book written about Him. He never wrote a song, but many of the great classics were composed to praise Him. Jesus penned no poems, but the greatest poems of

history were written about Him. He never framed a building, but many of the world's most beautiful structures were designed because of Him. He painted no pictures, but the world's best artists received their inspiration from Him.

Some misguided souls thought it necessary to fight wars to defend Him. Others created governments, drew up constitutions, and built cities because of things they believed about Him. No other individual in history has influenced the course of world history more than Jesus Christ.

But He has done more than change the course of history. His greatest work has been done when He changed people rather than nations...when He took a sinner and made him a saint (1 Cor. 6:9-11)...when He took a person without direction and gave her a reason to live (Acts 9)...when He took a millionaire and gave him incorruptible treasures (Matt. 6:19-21)...when he took what you were and made you what you are...that's when He did His most significant work.

So the next time you hear El Niño being blamed for another weather event, think about the changes the real "El Niño" has been making for hundreds of years. Scientists say the latest El Niño may become the "climatic event of the century." The Bible says He's the climatic event of all time (Jn. 14:6).

The Love of Jesus

G. F. Raines

Jim Bishop has well said: "If love--which is a perpetual act of selfless devotion--could be molded into arms and legs and sinew and features and brain, the result would be Jesus of Nazareth. Many who did not believe in him or in his mission saw in him a deep affection for all mankind."

No person who is truly familiar with the life of Jesus doubts that the mind of Jesus was a loving mind; and Paul says; "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5).

On the solemn night in which he was betrayed by Judas of Kerioth (a town of Judah, Jos. 15:25), Jesus said to his apostles, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34, 35).

Peter says: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love

one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Pet. 1:22).

Paul says: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

John says: "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 John 4:20, 21).

Sex

"What should we be telling our young people about sex?"

You have asked an important question. Consider the following statistics:

- Only 23% of the entire Baby Buster generation claim to be virgins.
- More than three-quarters admit to having sex with another single person.
- Girls are having sex much earlier these days; the median age for a young woman's first act of premarital sex fell from nineteen in 1960 to seventeen in 1990.
- By age eighteen, more than one in four church youth have engaged in sex.¹
- 7,742 teenagers become sexually active every day.²

But instead of soliciting my opinion on this sensitive issue, let's determine what God wants us to tell our youth:

1. Sex was created by God exclusively for married people. *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh"* (Gen. 2:24). *"..Let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband"* (1 Cor. 7:2b-3). Physical intimacy has been divinely ordained as a means

by which husband and wife express their love and commitment to one another. It is not only for the begetting of children, but it is also for the mutual delight of the two companions (cf. Prov. 5:19-20; S of Sol. 1:1ff).

2. Sexual involvement outside of marriage is morally wrong. *"Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body"* (1 Cor. 6:18; cf. 10:8). *"But fornication and all uncleanness...let it not even be named among you..."* (Eph. 5:3). Sex in itself is not dirty; it is the abuse of such that God condemns (cf. 1 Thess. 4:3-8; Acts 15:29; Matt. 19:9).

3. God's standard demands that sex be kept pure and beautiful. *"Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled..."* (Heb. 13:4; cf. S. of Sol. 1:1ff).

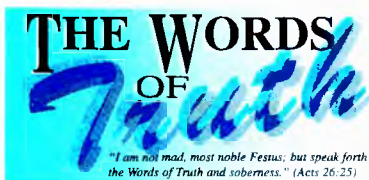
¹ Josh McDowell & Bod Hostetler, "More Fact Than Fiction," *Right From Wrong*. 55f.

² Beth Howard, "Class of 2001," *Omni*. 23.

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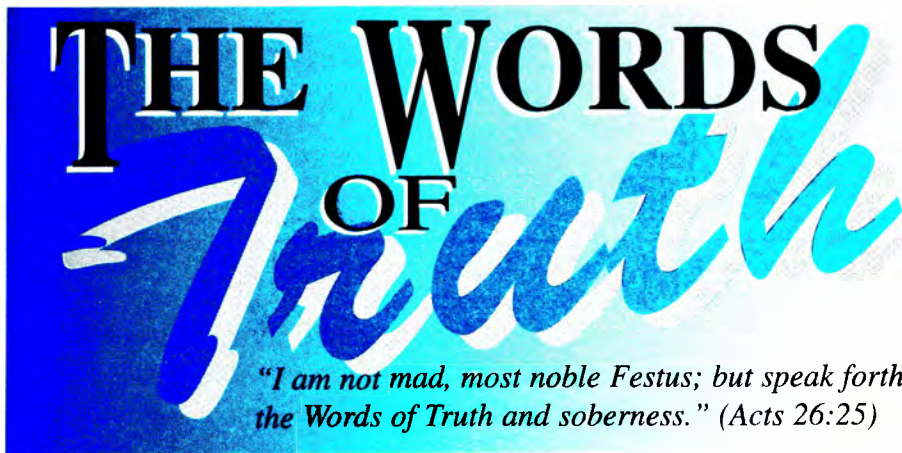
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Vol. 35 No. 14

April 2, 1998

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MAN'S SINS
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GODHEAD**

WRONG DIRECTIONS

Bruce R. Curd

The following story was told by a man who was traveling westward by train during a bitter cold winter. "The train had two engines plowing along. There was a woman with a tiny baby in her arms, who wanted to leave the train at a certain small station where the train was stopped if one came from a long distance. The conductor came in and called the name of the station as the train drew near. The woman said, 'Don't forget me.' and he replied, 'Sure.' Another passenger then said to the woman, 'Lady, I will see that you are not forgotten--don't worry.' Moments later he said, 'Here's your station.' The woman quickly left the train into the storm...The train had gone on about an hour when the conductor came in and said, 'Where's that woman?' The traveling man said, 'She got off.' The conductor sadly replied, 'Then she's gone to her death; we only stopped the train back there because there was something on the track.'" Then calling for volunteers, the train employee led them back to look for the woman. They searched for hours and finally found her out on the prairie, covered with a shroud of ice and snow woven about her by the pitiless storm, and with the little babe held tightly to her breast.

This story vividly illustrates the fact that one can follow the wrong directions; and, at the same time, have an absolutely clear conscience. The woman followed the wrong directions and they led to her death and the death of her little one (Proverbs 17:12; Matthew 15:14). In religion one can do likewise. We can follow the wrong directions and eternal death will be the result. Please, friends, let's look into the right directions and carefully follow them. Our souls are at stake!

RIGHT DIRECTIONS

These statements briefly but correctly point the way to salvation from past sins and to eternal life in heaven. Read the directions carefully and prayerfully.

1. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:30-34; John 3:18; 8:24).
2. Repent of your sins (Acts 2:36-42; Luke 13:3,5).
3. Confess Jesus as God's Son (Romans 10:8-10; Acts 8:37).

4. Be baptized into Christ for (unto) remission of sins, Acts 2:38; to have your sins washed away, Acts 22:16; to get "into Christ," Galatians 3:26,27; Romans 6:1-6; I Peter 3:21.

When these directions are followed, one is born again of water and of the Spirit, (John 3:5); he has been "translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son," (Colossians 1:13); he is in a saved condition, (Mark 16:16).

Then, after becoming Christians, it is our duty and privilege to practice the additions of 2 Peter 1:1-11 and to "run with patience the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1,2).

ASK YOURSELF THE ANSWER

There are two classes of people in the world--the righteous and the wicked. You belong to one of these two great classes. WHICH?

There are two great rulers in the world--God and Satan. You are serving under one of them. WHICH?

There are two roads which lead through time to eternity--the broad and the narrow. You are walking in one of these roads. WHICH?

There are two ways of beginning the day--with prayer and without it. You begin the day in one of these two ways. WHICH?

There are two deaths which people die--some "die in the Lord," others "die in their sins." You will die one of these two deaths. WHICH?

CONCLUSION

Do you follow wrong directions, friendly reader? You have the Bible, the way to life. Read it for yourself; do not gullibly swallow all that any preacher may say about it. Have a mind of your own and obey "from the heart" what God has taught in his word (Romans 6:16-18). Consider these words. They will make you wise unto salvation. They will save your soul and fit you for the eternal habitations (Luke 16:9).

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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GOD ISN'T A PARTAKER OF MAN'S SINS

In First Timothy 5:22, as Paul exhorted Timothy he said, "...neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure." This makes good logical sense. If it is a sin for me to commit a particular act, then it must also be wrong for me to encourage or assist someone else in committing the act. What grandmother Eve did in eating the forbidden fruit was a sin, but she must have also sinned when she offered the fruit to her husband. A dealer in illegal drugs could argue that he doesn't use the drugs, he only sells them; yet we would see right through such an argument. He's guilty too because he encourages others to use that which is sinful. Doctor Kavorkian is sinning when he encourages and assists in suicide, because suicide is self-murder, and murder is sin (I Jn. 3:15). We simply must not encourage sin in others. To do so is to be a "partaker in another man's sins."

Hold that thought for a moment and we will come back to it.

Consider that God cannot sin. He cannot cohabit with sin. Habakkuk 1:13 says of God, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." James made this point firmly when he wrote, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man" (James 1:13).

God does not sin. God cannot be tempted to sin. God does not tempt people to sin. In His absolute pure holiness it is simply inconceivable that He would encourage sin in anyone. Furthermore, He will not be partaker in another man's sin.

Now to the application of these points. There is a very interesting statement from our Lord in Matthew 19:6. He is explaining God's truth in reference to marriage, divorce, and remarriage. He is just about to give the law in this matter, but before He does He says, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Now think about that. The reality of marriage is more than just a legal document filed down at the courthouse. The reality of marriage is in the fact that God has joined two people together.

It is possible for two to be married without God's approval or endorsement. Mark tells us that Herod was in a marriage which was not God-approved: "For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife" (Mark 6:17-18). Paul demonstrated this possibility in the Roman letter when he wrote, "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man" (Romans 7:2-3).

Think about this: God would never be partaker in man's sins. Furthermore, genuine, God-approved marriage occurs when God joins two people together. In cases where a marriage would violate God's law, you can be assured that God doesn't attend the wedding. If a marriage is in violation of what Jesus taught in Matthew 19:9, (And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery), then God did not join that couple. Such union is marriage in the legal sense, while still not God-approved. How *can* it be since He has called it adultery? Incidentally, this principle applies as well to homosexual unions we hear about lately. Even if America's law does change to recognize such vile unions (Rom. 1:26-27), they will never be God-approved. God won't join them either, because to do so would be "partaking" of a man's sin.

Perhaps as we wrestle with the many circumstances which swirl around marriage, divorce, and remarriage we would do well to ask this question: "Did the Lord actually join this couple?" And whatever the answer, we must set out to agree with God in word and in deed.

CHALLENGE--DON'T CRITICIZE!!

Jerri Manasco

It has been my experience that the most outspoken critics are those who know the least about the subject of their criticism! One who has never preached a sermon in his life can offer the most critical evaluation of the preacher's effort. One who has never been an elder can provide the most scathing words against the decisions made by the eldership. One who has never taught a Bible class in his life can be the most verbal critic of the Bible school program of the church!

There are problems. No one denies that. In most cases the outspoken critic IS the problem! In fact, the difficulties cast in the way of others by the critic are far more hard to fathom than the problem they are attempting to handle. Outspoken critics are evidence that there is a spirit of grumbling in the church (Philippians 2:14). Such is not the way to accomplish anything for the Lord.

It is true that some things must be torn down, but before destruction we must have a plan to put something in its place. Even the prophets sent by God for spiritual correction of the people were not sent without something to put in place of the sins in their lives. Jeremiah was given a marvelous commission; but his commission, while one of clear demolition of all evil, was also one of rebuilding! "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant" (Jeremiah 1:10). The vacuum that would be left by the removal of evil would be amply filled with the better things God could offer the people.

Every congregation has within it some self-appointed purifiers! They see their job as the watchers of all the others. Of course they are not doing any work FOR the Lord, but they can certainly tell someone else when they are not up to par. This attitude is not the one which leads to edifying the church. Paul wrote, "Seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church" (1 Corinthians 14:12). Again, "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another..." (1 Thessalonians 5:11). To "comfort" suggests the idea of encouraging each other to do better. "Edify" suggests building up, making stronger and more efficient in the work. The

critic does neither one of these things. The critic can see what is wrong and where improvement can be made but will not offer one iota of help to implement his or her "suggestions."

Each of us should work to create an atmosphere that is favorable for growth and spiritual improvement. This cannot be done when there is constant beating and berating of the church. Are their problems? Then get busy and do what YOU can to do something about them. Generally the critic is the one who says, "SOMEONE ought to do something." That "someone" never proves to be the critic and the "something" that someone else does is never the right thing that should have been done! Such is the way of the critic.

I wonder how many aspiring young men have been discouraged from becoming preachers because some critic immediately had some negative comment to make about the first effort of that youth to make a "talk"? That young man might have become a most effective preacher of the gospel. Woe be to the critic who cast a bucket of cold water on the spark of potential!

Yes, we need to be constantly challenged to do better. This is the purpose of preaching, Bible classes, rebukes, encouragements, etc. But challenge does not include sharp criticism of honest efforts. "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works" (Hebrews 10:24). To "provoke" in this verse does not mean to irritate negatively, but to stir up each other to better things. Is there a class needing a good teacher? Stir up some of the good Bible students to teach that class! Is there a brother or sister who has become delinquent in service and attendance? Then instead of criticizing that fallen one and judging his or her motives, encourage one another to go out and reclaim the erring!

Are there young men in the congregation that show signs of great potential? Then get busy and encourage them to use that potential. Is there a new convert who is timid about public participation in worship leadership? Then get behind that person and nudge him on to his best work!

MOST OF A MINUTE - A Father's Time

Glenn Colley

I recently received this story over my e-mail:

"Daddy, how much do you make an hour?" With a timid voice and idolizing eyes, the little boy greeted his father as he returned from work. Giving his boy a glaring look, the father said, "Look, Son, don't bother me now, I'm tired." But Daddy, just tell me please! How much do you make an hour?" the boy insisted. The father, finally giving up, replied, "Ten dollars an hour." "Okay, Daddy. Could you loan me five dollars?" the boy asked. Showing his restlessness and positively disturbed, the father yelled, "So that was the reason you asked how much I earn, right? Go to sleep and don't bother me anymore!"

It was already dark and the father was starting to feel guilty. Maybe, he thought, his son wanted to buy something. Finally, trying to ease his mind, the father went up to his son's room. "Are you asleep Son?" asked the father. "No Daddy. Why?" "Here's the money you asked for earlier," the father said. "Thanks Daddy!" rejoiced the son, while putting his hand under his pillow and removing some money. "Now I have enough! Now I have ten dollars! Daddy, could you sell me one hour of your time?"

Ephesians 6:4 says that fathers are to bring those children up right; and we can't do that without giving them our time.

GODHEAD

Mike Benson

"Is their just one person in the Godhead, or three?"

The doctrine of the Godhead can be difficult to understand (cf, Job 11:7). Let's see what the Bible says.

According to the Scriptures, **there are *three, distinct Divine Persons/Personalities in the "Godhead"*** (cf, Acts 17:29; Rom. 1:20; Col. 2:9; Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19-20; Jn. 14:26; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Pet. 1:2). One God and Father, one Lord, one Spirit (cf, Eph. 4:4-6):

1. **The Father is God.** *"Blessed be the GOD AND FATHER of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ"* (Eph. 1:3*). See also Gen. 1:3

2. **The Son is God.** *"But to the SON He says: 'YOUR THRONE, O GOD, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom"* (Heb. 1:8*). See also John 1:1-3.

3. **The Spirit is God.** *"But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the HOLY SPIRIT and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to GOD'"* (Acts 5:3-4*). See also Genesis 1:2.

I personally have found it helpful to recognize a difference between a) The Godhead being one and in b) being one person. The Godhead is composed of three persons and yet is One (cf, Jn. 5:7) in nature/essence (cf, Deut. 6:4; 1 Cor. 8:6; Isa. 45:5), desire and purpose.

Study the following Biblical illustrations and note that the word *one* is not a reference to a single unit in the strict mathematical sense, but one in the sense of *unity*:

. Eph. 5:31	husband and wife	<i>one</i> in flesh/family
. Eph. 2:14	Jew and Gentile	<i>one</i> in Christ
. 1 Cor. 3:8	Paul and Apollos	<i>one</i> in mission
. Acts 4:32	Jerusalem church	<i>one</i> in heart and soul
. Jn 17:22	Father and Son	<i>one</i> in purpose

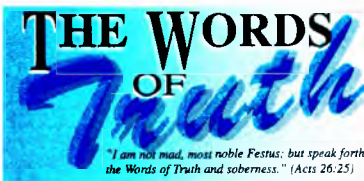
Now consider Jesus' prayer to His Father: *"And the glory which You gave Me I have given them. that they may be one just as We are one"* (Jn. 17:22*).

Believers are to be one in unity/purpose JUST AS the Father and Son, two members of the Godhead, are One unity/purpose.

*Emphasis mine - M.B.

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)*

Vol. 35 No. 15

April 9, 1998

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

**"GOING ON UNTO PERFECTION"
(No. 4)**

**GOD IS OUR FATHER
GOD'S FORGIVENESS...AND YOU
WHERE ADULTERY STARTS
DIVINE WISDOM**

"GOING ON UNTO PERFECTION" (No. 4)

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

I pick up with the numbering and noting of ways in which we may attain and then maintain the demanded perfection of Hebrews 6:1.

(3) We need to go unto perfection in hope. Christian hope is singular as per Ephesians 4:4. It means expectation, anticipation and desire. Premillennialism has a variety of hopes--that of the Rapture, escaping the great tribulation, the millennium and ultimately the heavenly hope. They have hopes too many; in Christianity there is one hope and one only (cf. Ephesians 4:4). By it we are saved as per Romans 8:24,25 which reads, "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." In the chapter from which our text title is drawn, Hebrews six, we have some concluding words filled with wisdom and weight relative to our hallowed hope. Paul wrote, "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (vs. 18-20). Christian hope rests and centers in heaven. Paul told Titus in the opening part of his epistle to him, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;..." (1:2).

(4) Another vastly important way of attaining and then maintaining spiritual maturity is to go on unto perfection in love. This is a logical follow-up to points two and three. Throughout the New Testament faith, hope and love are joined with admirable frequency. Examples would be I Corinthians 13:13 in the ASV; Colossians 1:4,5 and I Thessalonians 5:8. Likening Christianity to a house, faith is the foundation, love is the four walls

and hope is the roof.

Love should be three dimensional. It should reach up to Deity, out to others and inward to self. Jesus included all three in those valiant verses of Matthew 22:36-40. Love for God is supreme; then neighbor is to be loved as self. The new commandment of love in John 13:34,35 lifts love for brethren to an exalted state indeed--as Christ has loved us. Truth should be the pearl of great price to all of us and we should love it enough to live it, defend it, teach it to others and die for it if necessary. Ephesians 4:15 exhorts us to speak the truth in love. Implied are hearing it in love and living it out in love by both speaker and auditor. A lack of love greatly imperils our own salvation as per II Thessalonians 2:10. People lacking love for truth are not going to be interested at all in obeying it.

(5) There should be a going on unto perfection in service. Service is a stately synonym for sainthood. Illustrious David of the Old Testament is remembered by Paul in Acts 13:36 as one who served his own generation. Matthew 20:28 captures a remarkable portrait of the Christ by stating, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Paul captured the same spirit of serving as he wrote the Corinthians, "Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved" (II Corinthians 12:14,15). Faith can grow exceedingly and love can abound in marvelous fashion as Paul informed the Thessalonians (II Thessalonians 1:3).

There can be no going on unto perfection unless Biblical love is on the front burner in every Christian's life.

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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GOD IS OUR FATHER

Have you ever considered the significance of the first six words of the "Lord's prayer" in Matthew six? They are these: "Our Father which art in heaven."

Surely one of the greatest treasures to the Christian is being able to call God "Father." Out of all the possible relationships we might consider, none come close to the security, hope, and warmth of a Father and His child. Enjoy with me some of the passages which reflect this wonderful bond God has with us.

We are the adopted children of God. Imagine being a orphan, with no one in the world to claim you as their own. Then imagine being adopted into a family of love and commitment. Joy beyond words! Here is how the inspired Paul described our becoming God's children: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:13-16).

What kind of Father is Jehovah God?

He is a tender hearted Father. The psalmist David wrote, "He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; not rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them" (Psalm 103:9-18).

He pities us, meaning loves us deeply with compassion and mercy. His mercy to us is as high as the heaven. Looking to Christ, He has taken the guilt of our sins and placed it so far from us that we will never see it again. He knows our frailties.

He is an approachable and listening Father. Since we are His adopted children, what shall we call Him? Listen to Jesus: "But thou, when thou

prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven" (Matthew 6:6-10).

He is our one and only Father. How sad it is to see so many children today with two fathers or two mothers; One with whom they live, and the other they visit occasionally; One who is biologically a parent, the other who is married to a parent. Some fathers share their children with their wife's new husband. In the spiritual realm, God wants us to call only Him "Father." No one else. (This would not prohibit us referring to our dad as "father," but it would absolutely prohibit referring to a minister with that title.) Jesus said, "And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven" (Matthew 23:9).

He is a forgiving Father. The only time we see God pictured in a rush is in a parable where He is portrayed as a father. It is in the parable of the prodigal son. The father did not change their home into a place of riotous living in order to accommodate the rebellious son. God won't change truth about sin just because we have decided to live in sin. And yet, when the prodigal returns home in penitence, sorry for his sin, he asks to change the relationship with his father--maybe now a servant/employer relationship. But the father immediately rushes to the son with compassion and help. This is the picture of our heavenly Father. "This my son was dead, and is alive again. He was lost and is found." Paul wrote, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort" (II Corinthians 1:3).

He is an inviting Father. At this point we get a real feel for the importance of baptism. Furthermore, we are sad to realize that many who believe they are the children of God really aren't. How do we become His children? When can we call Him our Father? "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:26-27).

Today when you pray, remember these things as you begin, "Our Father in heaven..."

GOD'S FORGIVENESS...AND YOU

Don Williams

"Bless the Lord O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;...As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Ps.103:3,4,12,14). "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

The verses above (as well as many others) tell us of a compassionate God who forgives us. When we sin, and then ask God to forgive us our sin in accordance to the nature of that sin (whether private or public), we have the assurance of God that our sins are forgiven, pardoned, and done away with. As a elder friend of mine would pray, "We can stand just and justified in his sight."

However, some have a problem in forgiving themselves. I have had people make the statement, "I've done so much wrong for so long, that I just can't forget what I have done." There is a *difference* between forgiving oneself and forgetting what we have done. Our minds are so much greater than a computer, to the point that often we cannot forget the wrong that we have done, try as we may. Still, as long as we know that God does not hold that wrong against us, we should not either.

Recently, in a Seminar workshop that I attended, I heard a grief counselor make the following statement: "It is the height of arrogance to refuse to forgive the self that God forgives." Who are we to hold something against us that God will not hold against us? Are we better than God? Of course not. The guilt of that sin may stay with us for awhile. It may be that the sin has consequences with it, even though it was forgiven. Still, we would do best to ask God to forgive us, ask him to help us forgive ourselves, and then leave it with God. *Remember, we are dust.* At best, we are going to make mistakes. Hopefully, not *many mistakes, but at best some.*

Here is another statement I recently heard: "Forgiveness is the fragrance given off to the heel that crushes it." We need to forgive others who would hurt us, even as Jesus did. As our supreme example, he stated upon the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk. 23:34). All of us have at times received forgiveness from others when perhaps we did not deserve it. Thus, the statement above. May God help us all to know that we are forgiven. May we in turn practice forgiveness upon others, because of the merciful grace and pardon we have received from him (Eph. 4:32).

MOST OF A MINUTE - WHERE ADULTERY STARTS

Glenn Colley

The media is bombarding the American public with discussions of adultery these days. While that's sad, maybe it will help us re-think some important truths and develop strength in our own lives.

Have you ever considered where adultery starts? If you answer "bedroom" you are mistaken. It starts away from there at an office or school house or ball field or party. It begins with a glance and with electric conversation and then lust of the heart. And it is so destructive. If you want to avoid adultery, then be aware of

the little ways it starts, and never toy with it. Listen to God's word on the subject:

For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life: To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman. Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. Proverbs 6:23,25.

But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. Proverbs 6:32.

DIVINE WISDOM

G. F. Raines

Divine wisdom is the discernment which enables us to use knowledge aright. In his famous teaching concerning moral virtues and their contrary vices, Solomon, in the great Book of Proverbs, says:

"The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness" (Prov. 15:2).

'Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her" (Prov. 3:13-18).

The Book of God (Prov. 8) teaches us that:

1. Divine wisdom gives men good hearts (v. 13).
2. Divine wisdom has a beneficial and desirable effect on public affairs (v. 14,15).
3. Divine wisdom enriches and makes happy all who unreservedly embrace it (v. 17-21).

James says:

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord" (Jas. 1:5-7).

"Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (Jas. 3:13-18).

A man without wisdom is like a canoe without a paddle, a ship without a compass, a car without a steering wheel, an airplane without a rudder, and a bird without wings!

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)*

Vol. 35 No. 16

April 16, 1998

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EXECUTION

"GOING ON UNTO PERFECTION" (No. 5)

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

Again, I pick up with the numbering and noting of wonderful and wise ways in which we may attain and then maintain the demanded perfection (spiritual maturity) of Hebrews 6:1.

(6) There should be a going on unto perfection in the rich and rewarding addition of the fruit of the Spirit and the Christian graces to our lives.

Paul wrote Galatian brethren in a duet of dynamic declarations, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22,23). These would shine boldly, brilliantly and beautifully just in a context all by themselves. They shine even more boldly, brilliantly and beautifully against the repulsive works of the flesh which he had just delineated with disgust--adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like (Galatians 5:19-21). These are feeders of hell's population and form no part of "going on unto perfection." The former are feeders of heaven's population and form an integral part of "going on unto perfection" for a surety. These nine ingredients need duplication in our lives more than just the citing of definitions of each one. They are largely self explanatory. They lift us from the mundane to the spiritual now and to the heavenly ultimately. If every child of God majored in the attractive addition of these intense ingredients to his life, it would overhaul our local congregations, the whole brotherhood and each of our homes in short order. There is NO scriptural or logical reason why each of us should not be majoring in adding these ingredients to our lives each day we live.

The veteran apostle, Simon Peter, wrote saints of God in the five Asiatic provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynis relative to the seven valiant characteristics, usually designed as the seven Christian graces, in these words of weight and wisdom, "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they

make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:5-11).

Those who contend that we do not contribute as much as a whit to our salvation would have a most difficult time in explaining these verses. By the side of what God does for us we are to bring in, place by the side or supply our part in the precious process. We form faith; we do something in that formation. To it, as foundational, we add or supply virtue (manliness, courage and vigor of soul); we are active in this adding or supplying. We are active in such. We are to add or supply temperance (self-control or the holding of oneself in); again, we are active in such. We are to add or supply patience (steadfastness, endurance, spiritual toughness); in this we are active--not passive. Godliness is to be supplied or added. Godliness is reverence, piety, Godlikeness and a full discharge of what we owe God. Again, we are active in this addition--not a passive puppet.

Brotherly kindness is next in this lovely list. It means brotherly love. We are very active in this marvelous matter as a host of New Testament commands fully enjoy on us. Charity or love tops the list. This is agape love. It seeks the best and highest good for the object of its ardent affection. I regard this as the sweetest, purest and most elevated of all Greek words for love. Again, activity is called for on our part for a surety! "Grace only" advocates need to go to school to Peter and learn that salvation into Christ and salvation maintained in Christ subsequent to immersion are conditional--conditions imposed on us and that MUST be obeyed by each of us if heaven's door is to stand ajar for us in yonder's world. That we do not contribute a whit to our salvation is DEVIL TALK!

What we have discussed in this article is surely part and parcel of "going on unto perfection."

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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SAVED BY GRACE

There's a great deal of false teaching circulating today in regard to the subject of our salvation by grace. Are we saved by grace? Absolutely. Ephesians 2:8-9 will always read the same: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast."

This saving grace, however, is not unconditional. The Bible, divinely inspired, answers the erroneous doctrines about grace.

For example, someone might say or imply, "Because we are under the abundant grace of the Savior, we can take a less rigid attitude toward sin and the necessity of repentance." This line of reasoning is being used widely in regard to divorce and remarriage, the false teaching of denominationalism, and a variety of other issues. But this is a misapplication of God's grace. Romans 6:1 clarifies, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How can we who are dead to sin live any longer therein?"

Another erroneous teaching about God's grace involves the idea that Christians who, **TRULY** appreciate God's grace are not so concerned about being righteous. People who hold this view will argue that grace-loving Christians

do good works, but their knowledge of being saved by grace relaxes the stressful drive to faithfulness. "Rather spend time having a barbecue with your neighbors on Sunday night than to come to worship? Go ahead -- Anyone who would criticize you for that is obviously a legalist!" Is it incorrect to teach that God's grace DEMANDS striving to do right all the time? Consider Titus 2:11-13:

"Not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." (emp. mine, GC)

A sermon on grace today, which doesn't include the fact that God's grace teaches us to live right, is only half-baked.

The grace of God is abundant and marvelous. Praise Him for His loving grace! But guard against false teachers who would seek to make grace a license to sin.

MOST OF A MINUTE - "FEELING WASHED"

Glenn Colley

I was intrigued by a recent editorial by Donna Britt, a columnist for the Washington Post who wrote about her Easter church-going experience. She and her family don't go to church very much, but, after all, it was Easter.

She was glad she went. She wrote that she felt better, cleaner and stronger upon leaving than when she arrived. She wrote, "I always feel washed."

It would be nice, I suppose, if the Bible

would go along with this notion -- If in some chapter it said, "Go to church once in a while and feel washed." But it doesn't say that. In fact, to believe that is to play the game of religion, but not to live the life that will bring you to heaven.

Acts 22:16 says, "Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins." Rev. 2:10 says, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life."

THE GOSPEL IS GOOD NEWS

Johnny Ramsey

Most evening news programs on television contain most of the bad news of the world. A small percentage may be relatively good reports but they are rare indeed. However, there is a wonderful and beautiful message of hope and joy in the precious proclamation of the life and death of our Lord. Verily, the gospel is great news of a risen Savior who has gone to heaven to prepare a place for us (John 14:1-3). This powerful story of love and peace is truly glad tidings to warm our hearts and give us reason for life in the here and now (Mark 10:30). This alone should block out the dreary gloom so rampant about us. Christians have a wonderful Savior who cared enough to leave the bliss of glory (1 John 4:14), to die at Calvary so that we could be redeemed. He shed blood on the cross to make it possible for us to escape the penalty sin brings (1 Peter 2:24). That is the best news the world could ever hear! The gospel also provides us with our dearest friend (John 15:13) to brighten our day and defeat any pessimism that would cloud the sunshine of our existence.

There's not a friend like the lowly
Jesus -- No not one!

In deepest sorrow, heartache and loneliness, our Master cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). What glorious news!

Children of God also rejoice in our relationship with Jesus as the Master Teacher. He knows what is in man (John 2:25) and, as a result, can guide us into the verdant path of holiness and integrity with the wonderful words of life (John 6:68). In John 3:2 and 7:46 we see the epitome of His skillful teaching:

A man sent from God
with teaching beyond compare!

The gospel is good news because it brings comfort to

soothe broken hearts and to wipe away our tears. In Isaiah 38:5, Jehovah told a very sad king:

I have heard your prayers.
I have seen your tears.

Yes, the God of all comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3) will sustain us in our grief and loss. Till the end of time He will be with us (Hebrews 13:5). There really is a lot of good news available. Why not turn off the gloom and doom of television reports and open up the Bible to Psalms and find the power of God to lead you and calm your troubled soul?

There is true satisfaction when we surrender our very being to the glad tidings to Truth. When we learn to serve the Lord in the beauty of godliness, new vistas of radiant sunshine flood our lives with positive thinking and joyous service. What a friend we have in Jesus. Someone has summed all this up in a matchless way:

In Christ We Have...

A life that can never die;
A love that cannot be fathomed;
A glory that can never be clouded;
A beauty that can never be marred;
A light that can never be darkened;
A purity that can never be defiled;
A joy that can never be diminished;
A peace that can never be understood;
A hope that can never be disappointed;
A strength that can never be enfeebled;
A happiness that can never be interrupted;
A righteousness that can never be tarnished;
Resources that can never be exhausted

May we never overlook our tremendous blessings!

THERE IS SOMETHING IN A NAME

Jason Moon

Why are followers of Christ called what they are called? Who named us? Those are some of the questions that have surrounded "Christianity" for centuries. Critics have scoffed that the name "Christian" was merely man-given as a nickname for followers of Christ. Can the Bible explain why we are called what we are called? Let's see.

In Acts 11:26 we first read of disciples being called Christians. Some have doubted the authenticity of this name since it was not used until Acts 11. Why were those believers in Acts 2 not called Christians? No one for sure could answer that question, after all "the secret things belong unto the Lord our God" (Deut. 29:29). However, we do know that at Pentecost it was God's plan to preach to the Jews first (Acts 1:8). It was not until Acts 10 that Peter went to the Gentile nation to preach Christ to them after being persuad-

ed by a vision from heaven (Acts 10:9-18). So according to the Bible, it was after both the Jew and Gentile races, which would compromise "all flesh" (Acts 2:17), had been preached to before the disciples were called "Christian" (Acts 11:26).

So was the name "Christian" a man-given name? Our answer is based upon a verse from Isaiah 62:2 where the text says, "And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name." Our God knew exactly what He was doing when He hesitated on naming His chosen people. You see, it was after Peter preached to the Gentiles in Acts 10 that Isaiah's words were finally fulfilled. Finally the "mouth of the Lord" could call us our new name: CHRISTIANS.

EXECUTION

Mike Benson - Church of Christ, Parsons, TN.

"Don't you think it was wrong for the state of Texas to execute Karla Faye Tucker? Since she claimed to be 'born again' and had obviously reformed her behavior, shouldn't the state have shown her mercy and forgiveness?"

It is difficult not to let emotion interfere in an issue of this nature. Let's appeal to Scriptures for the answer you seek. Please study the following:

1. **Certain offenses are deserving of the death penalty.**

The apostle Paul, under guidance of the Holy Spirit (cf. Matt. 10:19-20; Jn. 16:13-14), recognized this fact. In his appeal before Festus he said, *"For if I am an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar"* (Acts 25:11). Note that Paul did not challenge the law itself, nor its prescribed penalty (cf. 1 Pet. 2:13-14), but only the validity of the indictment made against him.

2. **Paul said that he would accept his own execution if he had, in fact, been guilty of some capital offense - "I do not object to dying" (NKJV).** This phrase translated from the Greek language says literally, *"I do not beg myself off from death."* The apostle obviously did not view capital punishment as sinful, because he did not refuse his own execution in the event he was actually guilty of wrongdoing.¹ If capital punishment was sinful, then Paul petitioned his accusers to engage in sinful behavior!²

3. **God has granted civil government the authority to administer capital punishment as a punitive measure in order that justice might be served.**³ *"For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have the praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil"* (Rom. 13:3-4; cf. Jn. 19:10). If we interpret this passage in its first-century setting, it is clear that "sword" is representative of the power over life and death.⁴

A child of God deplores the fact that capital punishment is sometimes necessary, and is saddened whenever it is carried out. At the same time, he recognizes that a criminal (in this case, a murderer) is responsible for his/her actions, and may have to suffer the consequences of such.

1 He was not guilty. Acts 25:8,25

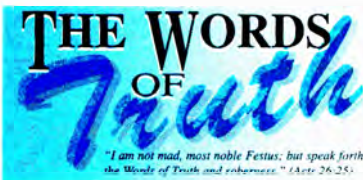
2 Had capital punishment been contrary to the will of God, this would have been an opportune time for the apostle to argue against it.

3 Had Texas granted Miss Tucker a reprieve on the grounds of her religious convictions, every death row inmate in the state/nation would no doubt make a similar claim.

4 If government fails to practice capital punishment it is not carrying out God's intended function.

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

Vol. 35 No. 17

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April 23, 1998

"Winnie Pickett"

Neal Pollard

She would interrupt the weekly devotion by crying out, "Can you help me find Winnie Pickett? Help me, *please!* Have you seen Winnie Pickett?" This elderly woman, a resident of the nursing home, made such imploring cries. What a sad visage she carried. But, who was this Winnie Pickett for whom she searched? A best friend now deceased? A childhood friend? A sister or mother? One of the nurses was approached to help in finding the answer to the question, "Who is Winnie Pickett?" With compassion, the nurse glumly replied, "She *is* Winnie Pickett."

Why did she make such a request? What a strange search, to be searching for one's self. Seemingly, Mrs. Pickett was not lucid. But, even in her confused state, she sought what so many choose to ignore. For whatever reason she "sought" herself, she illustrates an attitude that should live within the heart of every person.

She Illustrates The Importance Of Self-Examination. Paul urges, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Corinthians 13:5). One should want to know where he stands before God. One must ask, "In what spiritual condition am I? Am I walking pleasing before God (cf. Colossians 1:10)?" Christians must seek to know if they are walking worthy of that vocation (Ephesians 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:12). How sad that God had to ask a question of Adam that he should have asked of himself, when He inquired, "Where art thou?" (Genesis 3:9). In view of eternity, one should ask, "Where am I?" There are two answers -- either the narrow way traveling toward heaven or on the broad way traveling toward hell (Matthew 7:13-14). The answer to the question, then, is of infinite importance.

She Demonstrates The Concern One Should Have For Self. Certainly, God must come first

(Matthew 6:33). Concern for others preempts concern for self (Philippians 2:3-4). But, Paul's words ring with common sense when he writes, "no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it..." (Ephesians 5:29). The command of Old and New Testaments, "love thy neighbor as thyself (cf. Romans 13:9; James 2:8), presupposes that it is right and healthy to love one's self. If one has a healthy self-respect, he will naturally love and respect everyone in his life.

She Shows The Profound Sadness Of Being Lost. Her mournful cries are unforgettable. At least in her mind, she was lost. She did not seem to know where she was, and was afraid of where she was going. From all indications, sweet Winnie was not a Christian. How sad. To witness the steady decline of a dear woman who was outside of the fold of safety is helpless and agonizing. But, every day, there are healthy, vibrant men and women in the prime of their lives, who look fine on the outside but who are spiritually dead within (cf. Romans 6:23). Though physical death may be years away, unless they obey the gospel they are *eternally* lost (Matthew 25:46). There is no greater tragedy than dying lost (cf. Matthew 16:26)!

The skeleton of a woman was found on the hot sands of the Mojave Desert. Her last words were preserved in a written note. It read, "I am exhausted and I must have water! I do not believe I can last much longer!" The sad fact is that she died of thirst and exposure only two miles from Surprise Springs, an oasis that would have preserved her life (Tan 1216). Most lost people come in contact with Christians, who know the way to salvation and life. They are that close to escaping eternal loss. Will they die without the water of life? Many are the individuals who, like Winnie Pickett, are begging for someone to help them not be lost.

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

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THE TWO OBJECTIVES IN CORRECTING OUR CHILDREN -Hebrews 12:9,11

Some tasks in life, by their very nature, offer only one kind of training: On the job training. For the most part, that's true about the task of parenting. Most of what we learn comes after the babies are born. Ephesians 6:4 places special responsibilities on the shoulders of daddy. It says, "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Hebrews 12 compares the chastening of the Lord toward Christians, and the chastening of our fleshly fathers toward their children. From this we learn two important objectives in the correction of our children.

The first objective is to gain the respect of the child. Hebrews 12:9 says, "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live?"

Implied here is that seeking the reverence (or respect) of our children is an appropriate motivation for correcting the children. Here are some suggestions for parents as they work to dole out discipline to their children and achieve this respect of parents:

1. Try to never shout at your children. Teach them to obey your word simply because it is you who is saying it, and not because you are saying it loudly and frightfully. It is better to bind them to you by a feeling of respect, and by gentleness, than by fear.

2. Never permit your child to challenge your position or authority as a parent without correction. At an early age make the consequence of open rebellion unpleasant. Spanking, at an appropriate time, is good.

Mothers should not have to chase their children. When a mother says, "Come here," her child should obey. If the child goes the other way, the parent's authority is being challenged. Spank. Then repeat the scene right then for practice: "Let's try this again. Come here." Teach the child what respecting you involves.

3. Don't make hollow threats of spanking. If the parent says, "Don't touch that book," and the action continues, the parent may say, "I told you not to touch the book. If you don't stop, I will spank you." Now if the child continues, some uninformed parents may simply walk over and physically remove the child from the book without a spanking. In this case the parent has failed to instill respect. Unless you learn that you were wrong to promise spanking, then be sure to deliver.

The second objective from Hebrews 12 is in verse 11. It says, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." Notice that the punishment is to be grievous, or painful. However, remember that Ephesians 6:4 says, "Fathers, provoke them not to wrath..." Another translation says, "Don't goad your children to resentment." In other words, by putting these two key passages together, we learn that our correction is to be unpleasant (or grievous) Hebrews 12:11, but it is not to provoke our children to resentment, Ephesians 6:4. Perhaps the best way to consider this point is to suggest some parenting methods which DO "provoke our children to wrath," so we can avoid them while correcting our children.

1. Physical abuse. Consider the benefits of only using your hand to spank your children. Using a belt or a piece of wood makes the correction difficult to accurately measure. Use self control. If you are not completely under control, have your spouse to administer the spanking, or postpone it briefly until you can regain composure. Spanking is to teach an unpleasant consequence to wrong behavior. It is not to injure the child physically or emotionally.

2. Parental inconsistency. Parents need to ACT like parents. They need to convey a secure message of boundaries and the difference between right and wrong. When parents teach one thing and personally practice another thing contrary to their teaching, they provoke their children to resentment. In addition, parents should work to be consistent about punishment. If Johnny fails to pick up his shoes on Monday and is punished; he fails to pick them up on Tuesday and is just teased about it; he fails to pick them up on Wednesday and is punished again, there's a problem with consistency. Children will be happier and will better develop the "Peaceable fruit of righteousness" if parents will be clear and consistent.

3. Open parental disagreement about child discipline. If there is disagreement, parents should discuss the matters behind closed doors. Remember that the Father is the head, and must make sure that all is being done to rear the child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

Like fruit, which takes time to ripen rich and mellow, the righteous character of our children must have time to season and grow. The writer of Hebrews teaches us that chastening, done right, will help produce that desirable character.

BEWARE OF SIN!

G. F. Raines

When Saul became the first king of Israel, he was a righteous man and God was with him (1 Sam. 10:24); but because of his subsequent rebellion and stubbornness, "the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel" (1 Sam. 15:35). God departed from Saul and became his enemy. (1 Sam. 28:16). For many years, Saul was "like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest" (Isa. 57:20), and he finally killed himself with a sword (1 Sam. 31:1-6).

When Solomon became the third king of Israel, he was given wisdom, riches and honour (1 Kings 2:5-15); but he finally adopted the idolatrous abominations of the Sidonians and the Ammonites (1 Kings 11:4,5).

There is not a man upon the earth who is beyond the possibility of apostasy because of sin. The Book of God plainly says:

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. 8:13).

"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12).

"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But

exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:12,13).

David said to Solomon, the third king of the united kingdom of Israel: "And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy Father father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever" (1 Chron. 28:9).

Azariah, the prophet by the Spirit of Jehovah said to Asa, the third king of Judah (B.C. 962-921): "The Lord is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you" (2 Chron. 15:2).

The apostle Paul declares that those who do not "continue in the faith grounded and settled" will be "moved away from the hope of the gospel" (Col. 1:23) by which we are saved (Rom. 8:24), inasmuch as it is "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil" (Heb. 6:19).

WALKING FOR YOUR HEALTH (SPIRITUALLY SPEAKING)

Jason Moon

They are everywhere! Walkers! On the streets, in the malls, in the parks, on your sidewalk, they walk. Don't get in their way or you might get some tread marks on your forehead. Sometimes I think they are "walking about seeking whom they may devour." Actually, they mean no harm. They are only walking for their health.

Walking used to be part of a normal day. People would walk to work, people walked to the market, and our parents walked to school up hill (both ways) through a foot of snow. But walking now is something we no longer do out of necessity.

Walking is an exercise we need to put back into our lives. But I'm not referring to physical walking. Instead we need to walk spiritually for God. The Bible mentions the word

"walk" 203 times in scripture. But the Psalmist makes mention of that word nineteen of those times. According to the book of Psalms we are to:

WALK through death (Psalm 23:4).

WALK in mine integrity (Psalm 26:11).

WALK before God (Psalm 56:13).

WALK in the truth (Psalm 86:11).

WALK in the law of the Lord

(Psalm 119:11).

So the next time you see someone walking, may it remind you that you are to "walk for God." Let's start walking again, WALKING FOR OUR SPIRITUAL HEALTH!

MOST OF A MINUTE - WATERMELON -- THE SEED IS THE WORD

Glenn Colley

I love watermelon season. The humble watermelon is one of life's simplest and sweetest pleasures. They taste as good now as they did when I was a kid.

Hear the lesson of the seed. Though it contains the powerful gene of life it is bound by God's law. It can only produce after its kind. This watermelon seed will not produce tomatoes, or figs, or peaches. Only watermelons.

In Luke 8:11, in the parable of the farmer who sowed

his seed, Jesus said "The seed is the word of God." The seed can only produce after its kind. When you plant God's word in the hearts of good and honest people, it will not produce sectarian, denominational religionists. It will produce Christians, and only Christians.

When a person is a member of a church you can't read about in your Bible, you can rest assured that it didn't come from the seed.

PROVERBIAL WISDOM

Keith Kasarjian

A first grade teacher collected old, well known proverbs. She gave each child in her class the first half of a proverb and had them come up with the rest. Here is a sampling:

Better be safe than...punch a fifth grader.
Strike while the...bug is close.
Don't bite the hand that...looks dirty.
If you lie down with dogs, you'll...stink in the morning.
An idle mind is...the best way to relax.
A penny saved is...not much!
Laugh and the whole world laughs with you, cry and...you'll have to blow you nose.
Children should be seen and not...spanked or grounded.
When the blind leadeth the blind...get out of the way!

Though not what we are accustomed to hearing, there is some truth in these "proverbs". However, there are some not-so-new proverbs on which we can depend. By inspiration, Solomon passed on some wisdom we would be foolish not to heed.

WATCH YOUR HEART! Solomon wrote in Proverbs 4:23, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." The heart (the spiritual heart) is the root of evil or good. It directs our thoughts, actions, and attitudes in this life and what is done in this life will

determine where we live the next life!

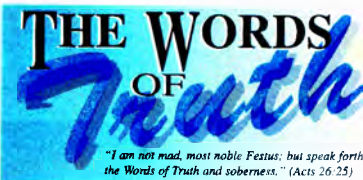
LEAVE ALCOHOL ALONE! "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise (Proverbs 20:1)." And this coming from a man who once thought alcohol might be the key to a happy life (Ecc. 2:3). Not only is it not the key to a happy life, it can prevent it faster than just about anything else! It would be humanly impossible to add up all the broken hearts, broken homes, and broken lives suffered at the hands of the cruel killer known as alcohol. Why would we not abstain from it?! (1 Thess. 5:22).

KEEP A GOOD REPUTATION! Solomon, the wealthiest man in the world, said: "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold" (Proverbs 22:1)." The world may take your possessions but it can never take your name! But Oh how many wish they could lose their name because they have soiled it beyond cleaning. It doesn't seem fair, but a good name earned over many years can be destroyed in seconds through a foolish decision. Yet, with a good name I am a source of pride for my family, a point of light to my congregation, and an ambassador for my Saviour!

The world has it's proverbs and it's "wisdom" but don't be deceived, "there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death (Proverbs 14:12)."

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)*

Vol. 35 No. 18

April 30, 1998

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VOICES IN THE WILDERNESS

Johnny Ramsey

Those valiant prophets of Old Testament days were truly voices crying in the wilderness. They spoke for God, as truth bubbled up and spilled out of their fervent hearts. Often the people they were trying to save for God's service deeply resented them but still, by sheer determination, those courageous servants of heaven pressed on in their loyalty to Jehovah. It was not easy to buck the tide of a convenient religion and the morass of ignorance that sheltered a traditional view of godliness. Jeremiah wept because the people of his day hid behind the facade of church-house piety (Jer. 7:1-28) that slowly, but surely, eroded the genuine foundation of sincere devotion. Isaiah was grieved because rebellious children added sin to sin (Isa. 30:1). In the tears of Jeremiah, as Lamentations is known in the Septuagint, that tremendous man of Anathoth wept aloud over the shameful indifference of Judah that resulted in seventy years of bondage in Babylon (Lam. 1:12; 4:5).

Ezekiel, down by the river Chebar, reminded the seed of Abraham that due to their inclination to be like the nations around them (Eze. 20:32) they would have the experience of seven decades in captivity to see how tragic such environment would be! Daniel, the brilliant statesman of heaven, in the midst of heathen rulers, would vividly remind God's backslidden people that the real Ruler of heaven and earth was the very one they had sinned against (Dan. 4:25). Those five books, Isaiah through Daniel, have powerful messages for us today, but, sadly, they are still voices crying in the wilderness because they are seldom studied and little known in our age. We rob ourselves of spiritual insight when we pass up opportunities to study the prophets.

In the last twelve Old Testament books we come face to face with some of the richest sections of Scripture. Hosea through Malachi is a block-buster of spiritual dynamite. They were preachers par excellence who defied all odds and every opponent to speak up for their Creator. In Acts 13, Paul reminded the Jews in their own synagogue, that they heard the voices of the

prophets every Sabbath when they read from Holy Writ! With the exception of Jonah, the reluctant prophet, those brave men persevered with a most unpopular message in the face of constant enmity by the masses. They magnificently proclaimed the message God told them to preach (Jonah 3:2). Men could neither hire nor fire them because their commitment was to their Maker and not to the mandates of their contemporaries (Galatians 1:10).

"O for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by every foe
That will not tremble on the brink
Of any earthly woe."

Let us notice on main point from each of the last 12 books of the prophets:

Hoses 4:6 - Bible knowledge is a must!

Joel 2:13 - Inward purity is demanded!

Obadiah 3 - Pride goes before destruction.

Jonah 3:2 - God's message must be preached.

Micah 6:8 - Proper attitudes must be manifested.

Nahum 1:3 - God does not overlook evil.

Habakkuk 2:20 - Reverence demands obedience.

Zephaniah 1:18 - Our idols cannot save us!

Haggai 1:6 - Life is empty unless God comes first.

Zachariah 13:1 - Redemption comes through Calvary!

Malachi 3:8 - Robbing God is a serious crime.

These combined points remind us that Amos makes it clear that we cannot walk with God if our lives do not agree with heaven's will. Joel forever reminds us that multitudes "stand in the valley of decision" and cannot escape making a choice. Micah beautifully promised the coming of Christianity (4:1-3) and the birth of Messiah (5:2) wherein our sins can be "cast into the depths of the sea" (7:19). Malachi challenges us to recall that Jehovah has a book of remembrance lest we so live as to have our names blotted out (Rev. 3:1-5). Haggai, in some of the Bible's most picturesque language, urges all men to consider our ways and turn back to God.

"You can advertise your virtues,

continued on Page 3

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ

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THE FORM OF IDOLATRY CHURCH MEMBERS SOMETIMES PRACTICE

How would you define idolatry? Webster says, "Worship of an idol or idols; excessive veneration for any person or object."

A sad reflection occurs when we remember the false gods described in the Old Testament -- Molech, Ashtaroth, Baal, Dagon, Diana, and that awful calf of gold at Mount Sinai. Idolatry is condemned in the Old Testament and in the New Testament.

Exodus 20:4 says, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them. For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God..."

First John 5:21 says, "My little children, keep yourselves from idols."

But Webster's definition is too limited. God, in His word, expanded the definition in Colossians 3:5 where Paul penned the words "Mortify...covetousness, which is idolatry." Notice, please, that in covetousness is no graven image made of stone or wood or metal. but it IS idolatry!

This demonstrates the fact that God sees deeper than the outer man with his earthly actions. He sees the heart behind the actions (I Chronicles 28:9). For that reason, God equates the man who worships Baal or Dagon, and the man who is covetous, with the word "idolatry." They both take the allegiance which rightfully belongs to Jehovah and give it to something or someone else.

Perhaps the greatest threat to our individual Christian practice is the heart of idolatry. The idolater, who was created by God, and is sustained by Him, says, "I don't like the parameters set by God in which a person can obtain righteousness. I want to view myself as righteous, but I'm not content with His boundaries. I will pull up His fence posts, so far as my life is concerned, and set them in different places.

Denominationalism is from a heart styled like the idolaters. The heart says, "I see the New Testament and the teaching of the one church of Christ Jesus. but I prefer a system of many different churches, all following their own path to the same heavenly destination. I prefer to design a different name for the church. I prefer another

name for members of the church, and I prefer an amended plan of salvation which doesn't require baptism." Is that idea not the great-great-grandson of ancient idolatry? It certainly is!

Another example is seen in the life of the man who refuses to be a member of the church, or the man who has left the church. He says, "I just don't think 'going to church' is important to go to heaven. I'm living a good Christian life without coming to church." This heart too is borne of idolatry. This man has reset, in his mind, the parameters of righteousness so that they don't include eating the Lord's supper with Christians on the Lord's day, giving as we've been prospered, or praying and singing with the assembled church. The serious Bible student knows that Jesus died for the church. Ephesians 5:25 says, "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it." I Timothy 3:15 says, "...in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." This wayward member would do well to consider how God views idolatry.

There are members of the Lord's church who have reset the boundary stakes with reference to morality. They've read the scriptures and heard preaching regarding morality in our speech (Colossians 3:8,9), our dress (I Timothy 2:9,19; I Peter 3:3,40), our activities with members of the opposite sex (I Corinthians 6:18; Matthew 5:28, Matthew 19:9), and our recreation (Romans 12:9). And still some church members will violate God's will in these matters. Perhaps they will justify their known rebellion to God's word by saying, "My God is not like that. He doesn't care about things like this," or, "I've learned from our preacher that grace covers things like this, so I'm not really concerned. I think the Christians who object are the one's with the problem." What is this but idolatry? We want righteousness, but we prefer to have it on our terms.

Let's all work to empty ourselves of anything akin to idolatry. The church of Christ is only restored to her purity when we seek to follow Christ's will over ours. May we all maintain tender hearts regarding the sacred scriptures, and hold His will in honesty and sincerity. With this heart we "Study to show ourselves approved of God, workmen who need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15).

You can self-achievement laud,
You can boast yourself somebody
But you cannot fool God."

Zechariah made it exceedingly clear that our own power and might will never propel us to that sublime realm but that the power of the Lord can sustain us. Habakkuk warns us that to sin against our own soul is a most serious mistake and that only the faithful will still be around when the smoke is cleared from the debris and carnage of iniquity. Hosea's tragic and troubled relationship with an unfaithful wife but magnified the role that Israel played as Jehovah's flippant bride. On the brink of destruction, reeling from apostasy, the people of God were reminded one more time that their bridegroom loved them freely and desired their return home. Obadiah tells of the shameful indifference of Esau's descendants who were unconcerned about

their brethren and passed by on the other side, even cheering Babylon on as they conquered Judah! For such spiritual crimes they would be absolutely shattered by the mighty hand of Jehovah's judgment. Jonah represents those today who selfishly care more for personal comfort and political clout than for the lost souls of the world. When the shade of a tree on a hot day means more to us than the plight of the unsaved millions we are kin to that reluctant prophet of long ago!

"While the souls of men are dying
And the Master calls for you
Let no one hear you idly saying:
'There is nothing I can do'."

Those voices crying in the wilderness, the prophets of yesteryear, beckon us to higher resolve and deeper loyalty to the same God we all claim to serve!

WE MUST LAY UP TREASURES IN HEAVEN

G.F. Raines

Our Lord Jesus Christ says: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matt. 6:19-21).

Theodore H. Robinson says: "'Break in' is literally 'dig through,' and recalls the mud and wattle hut of the poorest countryman, through which a thief with a knife or trowel could work his way in half an hour on a dark night" (The Gospel of Matthew, p. 55).

To lay up treasures in heaven, we must set our affection on spiritual things. Paul says: "If ye

then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Co. 3:1,2).

To lay up treasures in heaven, we must seek first the kingdom (rule) of God (Matt. 6:33); that is, we must obey the commandments of God:

"He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:4).

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14).

MOST OF A MINUTE - AS A MATTER OF FACT

Glenn Colley

Deane Jordan has a book filled with 1001 commonly believed "facts" which, as it turns out, aren't really facts at all! For example, the book straightens out the following:

--the Statue of Liberty is not that monument's name. It is "Liberty Enlightening the World."

--Footballs are not, and never were, made of pigskin.

--Despite their name, catgut strings in a tennis racket do not come from cats. Sheep are usually the source.

--There are only 46 "States" in the United States. Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts are "commonwealths".

Perhaps after listening to a little of this you wouldn't be surprised to learn that there are such "facts" within religion too. Consider one: "Pastor" is really not the term given for the preacher in a church, but for an elder, or shepherd in a church. To the elders of the church Paul said, "Take heed...unto all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers..." (Acts 20:28)

GOD, THE SCRIPTURES, AND THE CHURCH

Jason Moon

“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matt. 6:33). What a verse! It is a great verse to preach. People say “amen.” But, it is a difficult verse to practice! What does it say about my attitude toward God, Scripture, and the church when I put other things before “the kingdom of God and His righteousness?”

When I don't practice Matthew 6:33 I detest God. What? I love God, not hate him. But when we aren't loyal to God we choose the Devil. I'd never do that! But that is exactly what we do when we don't put God first. “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other...” (Matt. 6:24).

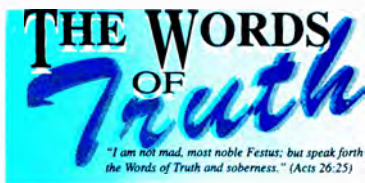
When I don't practice Matthew 6:33 I despise the Scriptures. I'd never do that! They are “given by the inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16). But, when we put other things before “the kingdom and His righteousness” we display an attitude of contempt for God's

word and in essence declare that it's not applicable and I don't really believe it. “He who despises the word will be destroyed” (Prov. 13:13). “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him -- the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (Jn. 12:48).

When I don't practice Matthew 6:33 I disdain the Lord's church. Where do you get that? The “kingdom” is the “church” Christ promised to build (Matt. 16:18-19). Peter used the keys of the kingdom and the Lord's church was established after his death, burial, and resurrection (Acts 2). This kingdom came with a high price. It was purchased with Christ's precious blood (Acts 20:28). When I don't put it first (including attending the assembly) I disdain his church and his blood. “Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace” (Heb. 10:29)?

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

Vol. 35 No. 19

May 8, 1998

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THE POWER OF KINDNESS
"ONE GOD, ONE FAITH"
THE BIBLE AND SELF-ESTEEM
WHAT LIFE IS ALL ABOUT
INSPECTION

MARKS OF A WISE MAN

Mike Winkler

Prudence is a gift men long to possess, but too few seem willing to pay the price to obtain it. Someone quipped, "It doesn't matter how much money you have; everyone has to buy wisdom on the installment plan."

Webster's dictionary defines "prudence" as actions marked by wisdom; skill and good judgement.

Solomon, in his Proverbs, suggests several characteristics one possesses when he acts and lives prudently.

CHARACTERISTIC 1 -- ACTS OUT OF KNOWLEDGE.

"Every prudent man acts with knowledge.." (Prov. 13:16).

CHARACTERISTIC 2 -- STRIVES TO UNDERSTAND.

"The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his ways..." (Prov. 14:8).

CHARACTERISTIC 3 -- THINKS BEFORE ACTING.

"The prudent man considers his steps" (Prov. 14:15).

CHARACTERISTIC 4 -- OPEN AND LISTENS TO CORRECTION.

"...He who regards reproof is prudent" (Prov. 15:5).

CHARACTERISTIC 5 -- ALWAYS WANTING TO LEARN.

"The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge" (Prov. 18:15).

CHARACTERISTIC 6 -- RECOGNIZES AND SHUNS EVIL.

The prudent man sees evil and hides himself, but the naive proceed and pay the penalty" (Prov. 27:12; 22:3).

Solomon, throughout his Proverbs, reminds us that as we develop the virtue of wisdom our lives will be blessed (Prov. 3:13-18).

THE POWER OF KINDNESS

G.F. Raines

It has been demonstrated thousands of times that man does not respond to any force as readily as he does to the power of kindness.

The apostle Paul says:

"...be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32).

"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:6).

Solomon, in his great chapter on moral virtues

and their contrary vices in the Book of Proverbs, says: "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (15:1).

Someone has well said:

"Kind words do not cost much. They never blister the tongue or lips. We never heard of any trouble arising from this quarter. Though they do not cost much, yet they accomplish much. They make other people good-natured. They also produce their own image on men's souls, and a beautiful image it is."

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
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“ONE GOD, ONE FAITH”

Christians take very seriously the fact that every man and every woman in every nation are responsible to the same God. The Bible contains the phrase, “All nations” fifty four times. God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34, 35), and all people are today responsible to Him. “Free thinkers” notwithstanding, the scripture still reads, “There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all (Ephesians 4:3,4).”

In our “toleration above all” thinking of the ‘90’s we may forget a simple and logical chain of thought. Namely this:

1. If it is the case that not all men are to be subject to the same God, and may choose other gods and other religions, and eventually go to realms of heavenly bliss, then,
2. It is also the case that NO ONE should follow the God of the Bible. For the God of the Bible says the opposite; that is, that there is only one God for all mankind, and only one hope by which people can be saved. If He is untruthful then He is unworthy of our trust.

In other words, we can’t have it both ways. Either He is the only true God with the only true faith for all people, or He isn’t true to His word and none should follow Him.

Recently in Kirkland, Washington, in a fifth grade class at Mark Twain Elementary School, the students were instructed to submit their answer to this question: “If you had three wishes, what would they be, and if you could meet anyone, whom would you want to meet?” Little Matt Picora wrote that he wished for “infinitely more wishes,” “to meet God,” and “for all of my friends to be Christians.” He added that the reason he wanted to meet God was “because He is the one who made us!”

Upon seeing the paper, the teacher for the class asked Matt to add “if they want to be” to the last response. With regard to the statement about God being our creator, she asked him to add, “in my opinion.”

In defense of her actions, the teacher pointed out that the assignment was to teach students to express a thought. They were expected to make revisions in their work to make the writing appropriate for a general audience. She told her students that an appropriate statement was one that was mindful of others and that respected the diversity of the audience. According to Matt’s mother, the teacher “was talking about how she believed in diversity in class, and how Matt was putting himself above the other students and hurting their feelings...”

These excerpts are included in this article to make this point: Christians must not allow themselves to be affected by this kind of “politically correct” thinking that ultimately distorts the truth of God’s word! It is true that the universal nature of the Bible is offensive to those who disbelieve God’s teachings. How should we react to that discomfort? “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). What God calls black or white I must not call “gray.”

Let our society and our world change as they will, but God’s word will never pass away (Matthew 24:35). Whether we live or die, succeed or fail, live in palaces or ghettos, there will only be one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God who is above all and through all, and in all. It’s truth which stands unbending and untarnished from one generation to the next. Psalm 100:5 says, “His truth endureth to all generations.”

John G. Whittler wrote, and we sing:
“Dear Lord and Father of mankind, forgive our foolish ways; Reclothe us in our rightful mind, in purer lives Thy service find, in deeper reverence, praise.”

MOST OF A MINUTE - THE BIBLE AND SELF-ESTEEM

Glenn Colley

When it comes to our self-esteem, the Bible teaches a wonderful balance between two dangerous extremes. Romans 12:3 says that a man shouldn’t think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly. On the other end of the balance scale we read in Luke 10:27 that we are to love our neighbor as ourself. Think about it: You cannot properly fulfill that command without loving yourself. The Bible teaches us how to have a

healthy self-esteem.

A famous football coach was on vacation with his family in Maine. When they walked into a movie theater and sat down, the handful of people there applauded. He thought to himself, “I can’t believe it. People recognize me all the way up here.” Then a man came over to him and said, “Thanks for coming. They won’t start the movie for less than ten people.”

WHAT LIFE IS ALL ABOUT

Johnny Ramsey

There are many precious things about Christianity that would not be available if the Savior had not left heaven and graced this earth with His presence. How empty and meaningless our daily existence would be apart from the richness and depth of the gospel era. We owe so very much to the resplendent beauty of New Testament Christianity. Whatever the world offers in its most glorious moment fades into nothingness when the radiant hues of the Messiah beam forth. For years faithful children of God have sung:

“Take the world but give me Jesus,
All its joys are but a name;
But His love abideth ever,
Through eternal years the same.”

Mankind struggles in vain to find genuine purpose in life apart from Christ. When the Lord and heaven’s message enter our thinking we are transformed from a dreary pursuit of merely existing to an exciting motivation and goal. Following our blessed Redeemer provides a destiny where God “will make all things new” (Revelation 21:1-5).

“Beyond the sunset’s radiant glow,
There is a brighter world I know,
Beyond the sunset I may spend
Delightful days that never end.”

Let us notice several key points that Jesus contributes to our sojourn upon the earth (1 Peter 2:11) that we would otherwise be bereft of had He not come.

LIVING FOR JESUS: WALKING IN THE LIGHT

How would you explain or describe the life of a Christian? There are twenty-one epistles in the New Testament which are dedicated to this matter. Romans through Jude contain classic data on the subject of Christianity translated into human conduct. We are richly blessed with such clarity of information in practical language for daily existence in the midst of a vile world that is insensitive to holiness and purity. Not many people in our age exhibit a desire to glorify God in the devotional words of Psalm 96:1-2, “O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless his name; show forth his salvation from day to day.” The essence of a life devoted to Christ is a grateful heart that will gladly submit to a daily walk with God (Luke 9:23; Rom. 12:1-2). An old and challenging song reminds us:

I am so wondrously saved from sin,
Jesus so sweetly abides within,
There at the cross where He took me in:
Glory to His name!

Once we realize how vain and futile life would be without the loving Savior, we will seek ways to magnify Deity. The power and grace of the Lord reminds us of this bulwark verse of Scripture: “**I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty**” (Rev. 1:8). How could we be so foolish as to launch out into a dark world devoid of the sacred light of His marvelous guidance? A compelling hymn captures this sentiment perfectly:

Without Him I could do nothing;
Without Him I would surely fail.
Without Him I would be drifting
Like a ship without a sail.
Without Him how lost I would be!

Perhaps no other Bible chapter better gives the gist of the solid sojourn of the Christian to the degree and depth of the twelfth chapter of Romans. This dynamic section reminds us that the followers of Jesus lead a sacrificial, surrendered, selfless and satisfying life before God and men (vs. 1-8). The high ethic of the gospel system leaves no room for conceit, laziness or retaliation (vs. 9-20). We focus on serving the Lord and helping those about us (vs. 14-21). Living for Jesus forbids self-pity and mercenary goals. The redemption of the lost becomes our magnificent obsession (2 Cor. 4:13). Trivial matters fade, and spiritual emphases naturally engulf our waking thoughts. Producing the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22-23) subdues the carnal activities that overwhelm the vast hordes surrounding us. We are seekers of treasure far beyond silver and gold, due to the enormous value of souls.

The rich dividend for the man who truly seeks God’s kingdom first (Matt. 6:33) is the glorious improvement it produces in his own walk on the earth. Someone wisely stated, “The highest reward for man’s toil is not what he gets for it but what he becomes by it.” The “peace of God which passeth understanding” (Phil. 4:7) permeates the pilgrimage of those who follow Christ even when persecution enters their lives. Any noble endeavor is worth the consequences which such action may bring. It is far better to endure hardship as servants of the one who died at Calvary than to escape tribulation because of cowardice (1 Pet. 4:16).

Living for Jesus may mean that we will someday die for Him. Revelation 14:13 emphatically tells us that will be the epitome of blessedness: “**Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them.**”

INSPECTION

Mike Benson

When we go over to the produce section of the local grocery, we carefully inspect the fruit, don't we?

We thump the watermelons.
We smell the cantelopes.
We gently squeeze the tomatoes.
We visually examine the grapes.

Surely none of us would purchase a piece of fruit without first engaging in some sort of thorough examination, right? And yet, how many of us accept religious doctrines and practices without proper scrutiny?

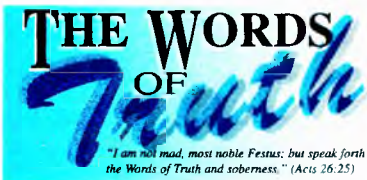
On one occasion Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are rav-

enous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn-bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit... Therefore by their fruits you will know them" (Matt. 7:15-17,20).

Dear friend, before you "buy" what a preacher says, make sure you *inspect* the fruits (cf, Rom. 16:17; 1 Jn. 4:1) of such. You wouldn't want a bitter piece of fruit, would you? Think about it.

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)*

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:
Some Changes I Propose
GROWN CHILDREN WHO
LEAVE THE LORD
DECISIONS THEN AND NOW
THANK-YOU LETTERS
TRUST
LET US GROW IN GRACE AND
KNOWLEDGE

Vol. 35 No. 20

May 15, 1998 *

Some Changes I Propose

Neal Pollard

In addition to the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine (Matthew 26:26ff), I propose we add a third element, some vegetable, to represent the new life of Christ, or some fruit to represent that Jesus is the first fruits of the dead (cf. I Corinthians 15:20).

During the prayer portion of worship, I propose we have at least one prayer where we pray to Moses, Mary, Paul, or at least Peter. They were not perfect people, but they are among the greatest saints who ever lived. That would be a refreshing change. Perhaps we can all sway or clap in unison while we pray. I cannot foresee on what grounds any Christian could reasonable object.

When we go to give, I propose that each contributor stand and shout the amount he is dropping in the plate. That would add drama to the worship. Or, each giver could do a theatrical number with his or her giving supplying the climax of the performance.

Preaching is something I think I know a little about, so I feel confident with proposals in that facet of the worship. What if I lead everyone on the pew in a cheer before I begin to preach, to build enthusiasm and make the worship service more memorable. Or, I could line the elders up and play "make me laugh" as the introduction to my sermon. I could put on a pair of roller skates and move around the platform with more flair.

Let us bring in an alter and slay an animal, after which the deacons will offer it up as a burnt sacrifice for our sins. The widow ladies can be seated before the congregation, where they can have a bead-counting contest. We'll mix up a batch of holy water, and I'll pour it on the heads of all of our babies, who we'll dedicate during our worship, or I'll anoint anyone who comes to be restored. We can place a bowl near the baptistery, where we can send folks to have their feet washed as an act of worship. Turtles, which we will use to symbolize the Christian race, will be raised and tended by a worship team who will race them down the center aisle after the opening prayer.

If the elders have not fired me or if the church has not yet clamored for my resignation, I will propose one more area of change. This time, to our singing. I propose that we get about ten or twelve of our best singers, buy them robes, line up a couple of bleachers, and form a choir to sing during worship. The very best of the best will be selected to sing solos therein. Those with the ability to play instruments, be it piano, xylophone, drums, guitar, clarinet, bassoon, or cymbals, can accompany the singing that is done. The rest of us musically-challenged folks can clap, snap, or whistle along. What an edifying improvement that will make to our worship.

Now, let me clue you in on the one thread woven throughout my proposals. Regarding each innovation, there is not one verse anywhere in the Bible which says, "Thou shalt not do it." The Bible is silent. God did not address or explicitly prohibit those matters. But, let us implement it all. What results will more resemble barnyard ballyhoo than reverent worship. I have as much authority to make baby dedications, rock climbing, headstands, Monopoly, pie-eating contests, and synchronized swimming a part of worship as I do mechanical instrumental music. Just because you do not favor the others but fail to see the sin of the instrument is not my problem. You could not biblically argue against them if you protect the instrument in worship with such a doctrine.

I am not trying to be ugly. I am trying to emphasize the danger of arguing for permissive authority from silence. Anything which adds to what God commands is a sin, just as is anything which takes away from His will (Revelation 22:18-19). If God does not authorize it and doing it will add to what God has asked for then reject it. Consider it sin. Consider it condemning. Consider it unsafe. Consider it divisive. Consider it "unconsiderable." Let's work at doing better what we have been commanded to do!

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

*Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
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GROWN CHILDREN WHO LEAVE THE LORD

Although relatively few pages of scripture are devoted to the discussion of Eli, rich and important lessons are taught by his example. This high priest was living a double life. He was seeing to his duties in the Tabernacle, and giving spiritual guidance to the worshipers, (1 Samuel 1) but he was also wrestling with corruption in his family that was slowly infecting him.

Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests by birth, not by character. They were described as "sons of Belial", which means they were worthless men and corrupt.

God had given the law which provided adequately for the priests. They were to receive part of the sacrificed meat for their own table (Leviticus 7:29-34). Hophni and Phinehas wanted more. In addition to the prescribed amount, these priests developed a custom in which a three-toothed fleshhook was struck into the pot of seething meat, and pulled out. They took that meat too. As if that wasn't enough, they also demanded meat to be given them before the fat was burned away. When the worshiper would protest, (for this was a clear violation of God's will, Leviticus 7:31), the priest of his servant would answer him, "Nay, but thou shalt give it me now; and if not, I will take it by force."

These corrupt sons of Eli didn't stop with profaning God's offerings. 1 Samuel 2:22 says that they "lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." It would have been bad enough for them to defile themselves with prostitutes, but they compounded the sin by seducing the women at the house of God! They treated God like he was of no more value, and worthy of no more reverence, than the dunghill deities of the idol worshipers.

Now consider Eli's reaction. This is important, and determined the way Eli was judged by God. 1 Samuel 3:13 says, "In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house, when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." He could have restrained them! He was their father. He was high priest, and responsible for making sure the activities of the tabernacle were

properly carried out. He was the judge, and had the power to cast them from the camp. But he did not. Why not?

Consider three possibilities:

First, he may have been afraid. After all, the sons had threatened the worshipers of God who got in their way. Perhaps they had treated Eli their father this way as well.

Second, Eli may have felt guilty. Perhaps he reflected on those fleeting years of his sons' youth when he failed to be as involved in their lives as he should have been. He may have felt that he had no right now to stop what he believed he himself helped to start. The boomerang of parental indulgence may have been flying back and smacking him!

Third, he may have been working on a foolish parental scheme to bring them back to their senses. Sometimes parents do this today. When their grown children leave the Lord they tiptoe around discussions of their sin. Parents may even gradually alter their views of those particular sins so as to justify their children. "Isn't this natural?, you might ask. No. It may be an obvious temptation, but it isn't good. God's disappointment and anger was raised against Eli.

Eli's lack of restraint of his sons becomes even clearer when we read 1 Samuel 2:29. A prophet speaks for God to Eli, "Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation; and honourest thy sons above Me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel My people?" There it is. Eli was going along with his sons. God lumps the three of them together in His rebuke.

In one day, Eli and his sons are dead. God had said, "Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy Father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house...And I will raise Me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in Mine heart and in My mind..." (1 Samuel 2:35)

Parents, regardless of what your children do as adults, stand for Christ and His truth. We don't do our grown children any favors by tip-toeing around their sin.

DECISIONS THEN AND NOW

Mike Winkler

God, since the creation, has given man the power of volition (Genesis 2:16-17 + 3:1-7). The Apostle Paul, in Romans 1:18:32 describes what happens to a society that chooses to reject God and pursue its own selfish desires.

DECISION #1 -- PREFER IDOLATRY OVER GOD. An idol has been characterized as anything that overrides one's allegiance to God. Paul states, "...though they know God...their foolish hearts are darkened...and they exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image..." (v. 21-23). Inspiration instructs us to always: (1) Give our loyalties only to God (Mark 12:30), (2) Pursue only heavenly or eternal things (Col. 3:1-2) and (3) Take control of our thought processes (Phil. 4:8-9).

DECISION #2 -- PREFER IMMORALITY OVER MORALITY. God's moral standards throughout antiquity, have been questioned, challenged and too often rejected (cf: the book of Judges). Paul, in Romans 1, describes mankind as possessing "hearts of impurity," "degrading passions" and "depraved

minds" (v 24, 26-28). Today, it is imperative that we always: (1) Seek to be pure in heart, (Matt. 5:8) (2) Focus our desires vertically, (Matt. 6:33); and (3) Renew our minds, Eph. 4:17-24.

DECISION #3 -- PREFER ERROR OVER TRUTH. The first century world is described as, "...exchanging the truth of God for a lie..." (v 25). Mankind, for centuries, has inquired, "What is truth?" (Jn. 18:38). Scripture answers that, "God's word is truth" (Jn. 17:17) and only His truths can emancipate us from sin and its consequences (Jn. 8:32, Rom. 8:1-2). The way of truth may not always be easy; but, we can be assured that it is always the best.

Today, we are challenged anew by God's revelation to "...choose for yourselves whom you will serve..." (Josh. 24:15).

MOST OF A MINUTE - THANK-YOU LETTERS

Glenn Colley

The late William L. Stidger, a famous preacher and teacher, once had a nervous breakdown. He was seriously depressed. A good friend visited him and advised, "Think of those who have benefited you in life and ask yourself if you have ever thanked them."

He thought and remembered a favorite teacher, a Mrs. Smith, who had given him a love for literature. He wrote Mrs. Smith and expressed his appreciation for her influence on his life.

Soon, he received a response in shaky handwriting. She wrote, "Dear Will, when I read your letter I was blinded with tears for I remembered you as a little fellow in my class. You

have warmed my old heart. I have taught school for fifty years. Yours is the first letter of thanks I ever received from a student, and I shall cherish it until I die."

Mr. Stidger was so pleased that he sat down and wrote 500 thank-you letters. The depression had lifted.

The secret? Serving others. Remember that after Jesus served His disciples in John 13:17 by washing their dirty feet, He said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if you do them."

Depressed? Try getting out and doing something for someone else. It'll do you a world of good.

TRUST

Mike Benson

A pilot was experiencing difficulty in landing his small airplane due to the inclement weather; fog had made it virtually impossible to see the runway. The airport therefore decided to bring the craft in by radar. As the pilot began to receive his radio instructions from the ground, he suddenly recalled a tall pole in his flight path. Panic-stricken he made a feverish appeal to the control tower. A reply came back rather bluntly,

"You obey instructions; we'll take care of obstructions."

It's difficult to trust when we can't see what's ahead, isn't it? The Bible urges, "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths*" (Prov. 3:5-6).

Think about it.

LET US GROW IN GRACE AND KNOWLEDGE

G.F. Raines

The apostle Peter admonishes us to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18). In verse 17, he says that those who do not thus grow will fall from their steadfastness, and in 1 Corinthians 10:12 Paul says, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

To grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ we must study the gospel, learn the will of God, and obey it implicitly and unreservedly as we learn it. Knowledge apart from obedience has never been sufficient to save the soul.

Ezra set a splendid example when he "prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments" (Ezra 7:10).

In Matthew 7:21, Jesus says that we must obey the will of God, which is revealed in the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16, 17), to enter the kingdom of heaven.

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews says that Jesus "became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (5:8,9).

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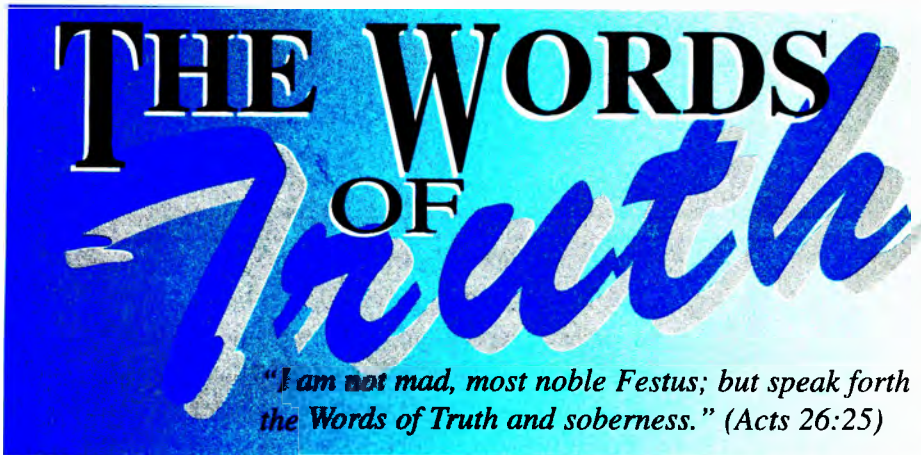
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Vol. 35 No. 21

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

Trouble...
Baptism: A Different Command
"A Reason to Rejoice"
Standing Between Life and Death
"What Are You Afraid Of?"

May 22, 1998

Trouble...

Mike Benson

I find myself struggling during the course of each day. Struggling:

With homes that have somehow produced a 13-year-old murderer and an 11-year-old accomplice.

With the senseless deaths of four precious children and a beloved teacher.

With just how families who lost their loved ones in the shootings will survive such a tragedy.

With innocent children who witnessed the injury and subsequent deaths of their school mates.

With homes that have been forever changed by events which transpired during a false fire drill.

With what it must be like to awaken each morning knowing that your son or daughter or spouse has been placed prematurely in a grave.

These are but some of the issues that I grapple with each day. My guess is that most of us have wrestles, at least to some degree, with these very same thoughts.

I have searched in vain for a passage in

the Scriptures that might serve to explain all of this. As of yet, I've not found the appropriate text. However, I did stumble upon these words, once uttered by a man who suffered beyond, at least, my comprehension. Having lost his wealth, his ten children, his health, as well as the respect of his friends and that of his wife, this man observed, "Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble" (Job 14:1).

Job was right. Our lives are, in fact, "full of trouble."

And yet with that certainty I find comfort in the knowledge that Someone is bigger than any trouble. The Bible says, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psa. 46:1).

Think about it.

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
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Baptism: A Different Command

A preacher for what is arguably the most popular denomination in America recently wrote on the necessity of Baptism, "Shall we say that all the other acts of obedience to Christ are a result of salvation but only this one (baptism) is necessary to salvation? I think not...?"

What he was trying to do was undergird the false premise that baptism falls along side of all the other commands which those, who are already Christians, faithfully follow. He believes that baptism is not for the remission of sins, but rather because of the remission of sins.

Although Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...(Mark 16:16," he would say, "He that believeth and is saved shall be baptized.

Is baptism different? Is baptism really a command that must be obeyed to become a Christian, or is it like the many others that are done after becoming a Christian? The answer is seen with the clearness of crystal upon a simple reading of God's word.

Baptism is different from eating the Lord's supper, or singing in worship, or doing good unto all men. What other act of obedience is:

1. For the remission of sins?

--(Acts 2:38)-"Then Peter said unto them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...'"

2. To put one into Christ?

---(Galatians 3:27)-"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

3. To put one into the death of Christ?

--(Romans 6:3)-"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

4. To wash away sins?

--(I Peter 3:21)-The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

According to God's word, baptism is essential to your salvation.

MOST OF A MINUTE - "A Reason to Rejoice"

Glenn Colley

In Acts 8, we have the record of the Ethiopian Nobleman's conversion. He was sitting in his chariot, reading from Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit then said to Phillip "Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." Then Phillip ran to him and said "Understandest what thou readest?" And he said, "How can I except some man should guide me?" The Eunuch then said to Phillip, "Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?" Then Phillip opened his mouth and began at the same scripture and preached unto him

Jesus."

And preaching Jesus includes preaching that men must be baptized. I know this because after hearing Phillip preach Jesus, the Ethiopian responded by saying, "See, here is water. Why cannot I be baptized?"

The same is true today. Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel... He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mk 16:16).

Standing Between Life and Death

Johnny Ramsey

In Numbers 16:48 we learn that Moses and Aaron formed the line of demarcation between the living and the dead. In this awesome section of Scripture we read of the rebellion of Korah and those who perished because of improper attitudes and motivations. Decisions that bordered on the ridiculous changed the eternal destiny of thousands of old. Sin was rampant and Satan rejoiced over the shallow ideas of carnal minds.

The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the Snares of death
(Proverbs 13:14).

The consequences of foolish alliances and sinister plans will overflow the banks of Hell!

The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy
(Proverbs 14:10).

In Jude 11, centuries later, men were warned of the gainsaying of Korah! What a price to pay!

Today there are vital people that stand between death and life. Their loyalties, for good or bad, help decide for others the route they will take and the path they will follow. Will we join the vast multitudes on the broad way that eventually ends in torment? Or, will we wisely traverse the narrow way with the few who find the golden strand of glory (Matthew 7:13-14)?

But let all those that put their trust in thee Rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.
(Psalm 5:11)

Parents are an integral link in this chain that propels children to victory or defeat at the end of the spiritual journey. Mothers and Dads have a tremendous role on the stage of life. They literally stand between the living and the dead. Millions will be in heaven because of devoted, holy and Christ-like parents that taught and lived earnestly the gospel of grace (Acts 20:24). Conversely, due to weak and insipid guardians, tragically, thousands will go to perdition. If we all had mothers like Hannah, Lois and Eunice we would have more sound preachers like Samuel and Timothy! When men like Joshua take a stand for truth offspring grow closer to God! No one shines brighter in the hall of fame of spiritual leadership than a parent that puts Christianity absolutely first.

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid (Matthew 5:14).

Gospel preachers stand between the dead and the living. The truth they preach can make men free whereas the truth they hold back can result in lost souls on Judgment Day. How sad it would be to stand in the shoes of cowardly evangelists when we stand before the Master Teacher in that final hour!

How deeply grieved our soul will be,
If some lost one there should cry in deep despair,
You never mentioned Christ to me,
You met me day by day and knew I was astray
And, yet, you never mentioned Him to me...

What a haunting cry! The beauty of the glad tidings must be shared with the lost and dying world. Our magnificent obsession must be the message of redemption proclaimed.

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and his ways past finding out! (Romans 11:33).

According to Ezekiel 3:17-20, when we stand between the living and the dead and fail to warn them, we, too, shall die. What a terrible price to pay because we were spiritually tongue-tied as God's silent partner!

Jesus and the plan of salvation stand powerfully between the dead and the living. John 8:21 clearly states that men who die in sin cannot spend eternity with Jesus and the redeemed. In Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16 we read verses of definite clarity that demand belief, repentance and baptism prior to salvation.

Recently, a woman told a gospel preacher:

"I will die and go to hell before I will be baptized."

She did not realize how true are those words.

Where do we stand right now in regard to life and death? Deuteronomy 30:15 is a proper verse to close with:

I have set before this day life and good and Death and evil...What shall be our decision? Will it be light or darkness?

"What Are You Afraid Of?"

Mike Winkler

"What are you afraid of?" The Bible speaks of two kinds of fear. First, there is the fear which is often referred to as respect or reverence. It is this kind of fear that we are commanded to manifest toward God (Ecc. 12:13; Prov. 9:10). The second kind of fear is synonymous with dread, anxiety, and distrust. It is this kind of fear that Christians are forbidden to have (Psm. 9:5; Luke 12:32). It is in conjunction with the fear of dread that we ask the question, "What are you afraid of?"

Are we afraid of failure? It was the fear of failure that caused the one talent man to bury his talent and do nothing (Matt. 25:25). Yet, the Christian's responsibility is to do everything that he can with the talents, gifts, and opportunities God has given him (Matt. 25:15). Remember, we never fail when we do our best!

Are we afraid of responsibility? Again, it was out of fear that the one talent man refused to

accept his responsibilities (Matt. 25:25). Too, fear causes God's people to shirk their responsibility in conquering the promise land (Deut. 1:22-26). Remember, fear and only fear will keep one from fulfilling his responsibilities that God has trustfully given (Luke 5:10).

Are we afraid of what others will say or think about us? It was the fear of others that prompted Peter to cowardly deny Jesus (Matt. 26:69-75). Solomon was right when he said, "That fear of man brings a snare" (Prov. 29:25). What really matters is not what man thinks, but what God thinks!

Remember: To fear God is good and right, however, to fear life is foolish.

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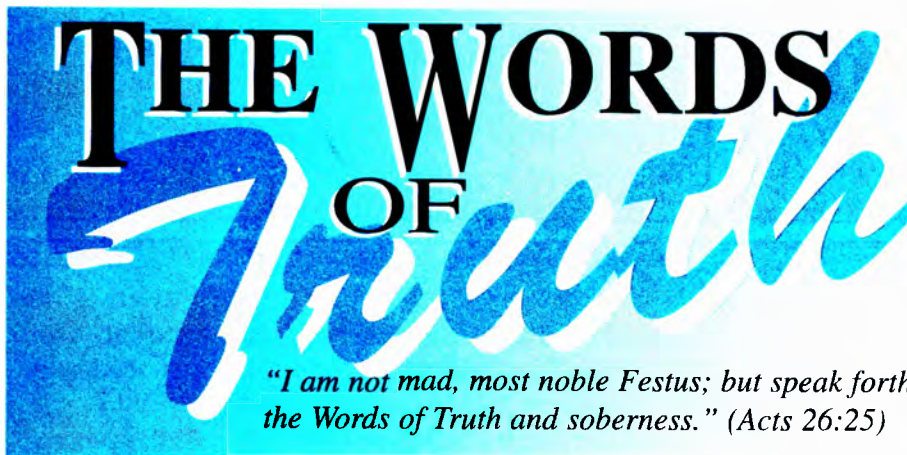
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Vol. 35 No. 22

May 29, 1998

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:
Contributions to Salvation
Adios
Three Essentials To Successful Living
Standing For Our Students
America Is Boiling Frogs

Contributions to Salvation

By Johnny Ramsey

Whatever it is that helps to save our souls is of monumental value and ought to be highly esteemed. Nothing compares to the joy of redemption. Therefore, we ought to be exceedingly attentive to anything that contributes to our eternal destiny with God in heaven. It would be beyond tragic to miss the golden shore of glory and sad to the zenith degree to be in torment everlastingly. A great song tells us:

Only faintly now I see Him,
 With a darkling veil between,
 But a blessed day is coming,
 When His glory shall be seen.

We should be forever grateful for those things that propel us to the right hand of the Father above. Notice the following list we should count as blessings on our journey toward that land that beckons the people of God:

- The Power of Truth
- Godly Parents
- Concern From Other Christians
- Loyal Gospel Preachers
- The Joy of Living For Jesus
- The Emptiness of Sin
- The Gratitude of Sincere Hearts
- The Anticipation of Seeing Loved Ones

Motivation is a powerful tool in every avenue of endeavor. Especially is this true in regard to spiritual goals, ambition and dedication. With the friendship of those of like precious faith we can march together toward the promised land.

Truth alone can free us from the prison of evil, error and despair. But it takes faithful preaching of

the glad tidings and the example of devoted parents with spiritual fervor to plant in our hearts the good news of redemption and conviction. Also, the common bonds we share with dedicated brothers and sisters in the Lord point us in the direction of steadfast devotion and commitment to the Creator. The joy and satisfaction of serving the Savior make it all worthwhile in the struggles and pitfalls of earthly life.

Be with me Lord, No other gift or
 Blessing,
 Thou couldst bestow could with this one
 Compare;
 A constant sense of Thy abiding
 Presence,
 Where'er I am, to feel that Thou art
 Near.

Sin, with its very high prices, can beguile, mislead and overwhelm us but it can also open our eyes as to how shallow the pursuit of evil truly is!

Nearer, still nearer, Lord to be Thine,
 Sin with its follies I gladly resign;...

All of these points blend into an appraisal of how grateful we ought to be that we have a choice in regard to time and eternity. How we spend our time will determine where we spend eternity. And, the glorious anticipation of being with our loved ones, who died in Christ, spurs us on toward the gates of pearls and a golden street in the sweet halls of heaven.

In view of the valuable reward awaiting the saints of God, we ought to always be willing to stand up for Christ, the gospel, the church, sound doctrine, the plan of salvation and moral purity. Appreciation for blessings demands loyalty.

FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Colley

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
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Adios

After much prayer and thought I have accepted the kind invitation to be the new preacher for the Collierville Church of Christ in Collierville, Tennessee.

The last six years have passed by more quickly than any others of my life. They were hit-and-run year filled to capacity with tasks and responsibilities, joys and sorrows, successes and defeats. Now as I reflect over the time I feel a deep sense of gratitude for the privilege of being the preacher for the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ and the editor of the *Words of Truth*. I came to this work believing it to be an honor, and I leave now with the same sense of honor. The men before me, Gus Nichols, Bobby Duncan, Flavil Nichols, David Wade, Joe Spivey, and others, who have done this work and edited this great paper, are/were men of stature and have my abiding respect. I am pleased and humbled to have my name historically included on such a fine list.

I wish to thank all of those men and women who have written for the *Words of Truth* over the last six years. The amount of time and study necessary to produce this number of articles is immeasurable. I am indebted to all who wrote, especially to those who were frequent writers. I

hope these and many more will desire to use their abilities to write in hopes of readers being taught, encouraged, and edified in serving the Lord better and better.

I wish to also thank the members of the Sixth Avenue Church who have never failed to encourage and strengthen me in the work God has given me to do. After this long the church knows a preacher's weaknesses as well as his strengths, and yet these people love us still.

The elders here have invited Levi Sides and Glenn Posey to become the co-editors of the *Words of Truth*. They are both good men who will do an outstanding job of producing this paper. I want to encourage you to keep your subscription current and continue reading every week. Tell others about this wonderful supply of insight and sound Bible teaching. All will benefit from the reading.

I wish for all our readers God's richest blessing. Please keep my family and me in your prayers as we begin a new work.

"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (II Peter 3:18).

Standing For Our Students

Daniel F. Cates

Around this time every year students begin to fill the halls of schools throughout the land. We speak of a child's graduation, but actually a child has many graduations. The child is graduating yearly from one level to the next. A graduation is a change, and any change can be difficult. As our children graduate to this next level, whether it be from third to fourth grade or from high school to college, let us consider some of the pressures which they will face in this new school year.

Students of all ages will most assuredly face that which we call peer pressure. Peer pressure is one of the most difficult types of pressure to withstand. Even at the youngest age children are subject to ridicule if they do not think like the other children, or if they do not act like their peers. How do we stand for our students? Let us assure them that we are parents, as friends, or as fellow Christians are here for them. Let us encourage them to associate with their peers which are Christians, and thereby help them to

grow. Carefully consider Proverbs 22:6 in relation to your children's friends, dress, activities, and attitudes and therewith lend instruction and correction when it is needed.

Students also face pressures in school which can completely destroy their faith in God. Evolution is taught as fact from even young ages, and even in some "Christian" schools. Take the time to look through the text books which your children have to see if they teach such error, chances are that they do. Assure your children that evolution is not the case and assure them, using God's Word, that "the heavens declare the glory of God" as recorded in Psalm 19:1, and that they are "fearfully and wonderfully made" as David wrote in Psalm 139:14. Stand for your students by relying upon God's inspired Word to give a defense against the pressures which they face in the classroom.

A final pressure which we will list in this short
continued on Page 3

Standing For Our Students, *continued from Page 2*

period is the pressure which is primarily found in our Christian colleges, but which is also found in many of our high schools. It is the pressure to forsake the teaching of mother and father and to take the more up-to-date feeling oriented doctrines which are being spread en masse. The proponents of these doctrines are smooth speaking teachers who chip away at the truths taught in God's Word. Ultimately they take so much of

the church out of the child that the child is taken out of the church. Let us be aware as we stand for our students that this pressure exists and that it is claiming more souls than it could ever hope to save.

Three Essentials To Successful Living

Sam Willcut

According to my New Webster's Dictionary and Thesaurus of the English Language, success is defined as, "the accomplishment of what is desired or aimed at, achievement." This definition suggests that success does not happen by chance or accident; it must be desired or achieved. However, this definition does not even begin to inform how to have successful living. One might achieve many of the things he/she desires, yet live a miserable and wretched life. The second definition goes like this: "the attainment of wealth, fame, prosperity, etc." No wonder our society is how it is! This is exactly how our world measures success. Nevertheless, those with the most fame and prosperity can be the most miserable souls on earth. Success is attainable, but we must be properly informed. Notice three essentials to successful living.

The first essential is a self to live with. This is dealing with self-respect. Take Judas Iscariot for example. He could have obtained forgiveness of his sin in betraying the Lord (Matthew 27:3-5), couldn't he? So what was the problem? He could not live with himself. He did exactly what the chief priests told him to do. When he admitted to them, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood," they responded, "What is that to us? See thou to it." And he tried-by hanging himself. No matter how grievous of sins we have committed, there is hope (Isaiah 1:8). If Judas would have realized it, he wouldn't have committed suicide. What is that hope? Just because we cannot atone for our own sins does not mean we have to bear the guilt of our sins. Jesus is the propitiation for our sins, or in other words, he secured the guilt with God through himself on the cross (1 John 2:1-2). God promises, "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities

where does self-respect come in? We must be willing to forgive ourselves. Many obtain the forgiveness of God and even of others, but have a very difficult time forgiving themselves. Then we should live in such a way to maintain our self-respect by remaining unspotted from the world (James 1:27), dealing honestly with others (Titus 2:11-12), and giving God his rightful place in life (Matthew 6:33).

The second essential is a faith to live by. Did you know that the phrase "Fear not" occurs 63 times in the King James Version of the Bible? Why does this admonition widely occur? Because fear comes from a lack of faith. Peter, for example, walked the water toward Jesus until he became afraid (Matthew 14:30). He took his eyes off Jesus and saw the huge waves, and his faith diminished. Notice the words of Hebrews 13:5-6. This faith must be one which we live by (Galatians 2:20; 11 Corinthians 5:7). This faith gives us strength to do right and obey God (Philippians 4:13). It gives us peace (Philippians 4:6-7). Unless you are living your life by the Bible, do not claim you live by faith, because living by faith means allowing your life to be controlled by that faith (Romans 10:17).

The third essential is a purpose to live for. Many people in the world have the wrong purpose in life. All of them ignore the purpose for which God made man and placed him on earth (Acts 17:26-27). Paul said it best when he said, "According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that is nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:20-21).

Are you living life successfully?

America Is Boiling Frogs

David Sain

Possibly you have heard the story of how to boil a live frog. You do it gradually. If you put a frog in water that is already boiling, he will jump out. However, if you put the frog in tepid water, he will find it comfortable and stay. Then, increase the temperature gradually. As the water gets hotter, the frog hardly notices and gets used to the hotter water until finally, he is boiled to death.

I am fearful that America is "boiling frogs" - and we are the frogs!

We are gradually becoming accustomed to some really terrible and harmful things. Adultery...premarital sex...pornography...disrespect for those in authority...profanity...blasphemy...etc. are some examples. These things were evil and repulsive to generations past, but are now tolerated and hardly noticed by our desensitized culture.

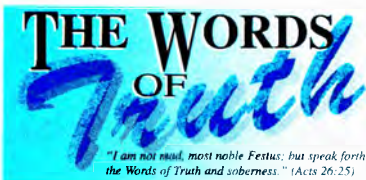
We are so desensitized to the glorification of evil on the electronic screen, that hardly anything is unacceptable if it is done in the name of entertainment!

If you think I am overstating the case, take a look at an average day's fare on television. There are things commonly seen on TV which my grandfather would have quickly labeled pornographic! And I dare you to take count of the cursing, sex between unmarried people, and the taking of God's name in vain which are done daily in the homes of America through this captivating medium! And this is to say nothing about violence and crimes.

Disregard, for the moment, the impact that this can have on

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adults. What is such going to do to the thinking and values of the children who get a steady diet of it from early childhood through the teenage years? And, if you are inclined to say that TV does not influence us, then explain the enormous amounts advertisers pay. They are sure that you are influenced by what you see and hear!

There is a "boiling of frogs" going on in theatres also. In 1939, Clark Gable shocked America with one curse word in "Gone With The Wind." In the 1960's Abbott and Costello were required to change the ending to their famous "Who's On First?" routine and replace a curse word with a euphemism. But, oh, how things have changed since then! The profanity in movies now is atrocious, including most with a PG-13 rating, and some with a PG rating.

In a different direction, consider this: In 1969, "Midnight Cowboy" was rated X in its original release. Now it carries a less restrictive R rating, and, as one newspaper reporter sated it, "might even earn a PG-13 if it should catch the ratings board in a generous mood." You see, what was once "X" is now "R" and will, one day soon, be "PG-13."

The explicit sex scenes (which always involve a sinful situation), the graphic violence, and the vile language are senseless and debasing, yet more and more acceptable to a numb and jaded society. One has to wonder how much we will accept in the name of entertainment!

What's that I smell? Something boiling? Boy, it's getting hot in here! Rrrbbit!

THE WORDS OF *Truth*

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)*

Vol. 35 No. 23

June 4, 1998

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:
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Editorial Policy

Make Jesus Your Banker

Allen Webster

Newspaper headlines read: S & Ls foreclose: FDIC Must Rescue Major Banks; Embezzlement and Fraud; Insurance Companies File for Bankruptcy; Stock Market Takes a Tumble. One wonders, "Is there financial security today?" Where can I put my money and not have to worry about it?

Did you know that Jesus is in the banking business? He said,

"Lay not up for yourself treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Mt. 6:19-21).

He is knowledgeable (Jn. 2:24-25), trustworthy (1 Pet. 2:21, 22), and courteous (Jn. 8:1-11). What better investment could one make than to invest in heaven's bank?

Opening an account:

As with all accounts, heaven's bank requires meeting certain requirements. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Mt. 7:21). God's grace requires that one meet His conditions (Eph. 2:8, 9). Jesus requires faith, repentance, confession and baptism before he begins to place one's treasures in heaven (Jn. 3:16; Lk. 13:3; Mt. 10:32; Acts 2:38).

Risk Free:

Earthly accounts may claim to be risk-free, but they are based entirely on national economics. If the stock market crashes and the dollar value tumbles, our legal tender will be worthless. This is not true of banking in heaven, for Jesus said, "...neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and...thieves do not break through nor steal" (Mt. 6:20). While one may remove his treasures from heaven (2 Pet. 2:20-22), no one can force him to. Jesus promised, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (Jn. 10:27-29).

High Interest:

No earthly account can boast such a high yield! We give God our money, talents, time, love and life (Mt. 22:37; Rm. 12:1,2) and we receive eternal bliss (Jn. 3:15), in a place so perfect it defies deserved description (Jn. 14:1-6; Rev. 21:1-27).

Club Benefits:

A bank or credit union may offer customers special incentives to place Money in its care. These privileges may include discounts at restaurants, movie theaters and wholesale clubs. Heaven's bank offers club benefits which no other can match. Christians are given "peace which passeth understanding" (Phil. 4:6), strength in weakness (Psa. 46:1; 2 Cor. 12:9, 10), comfort in distress (2 Cor. 1:3), hope in death (Rev. 14:13), a listening ear (Jas. 5:16), a loving hand (Psa. 73:23), a watchful eye (1 Pet. 3:12) and a concerned heart (1 Pet. 5:7). What bank can make these claims?

No Diversification:

There are restrictions to our membership in heaven's bank. We are not allowed to diversify our interests at all. ALL must be invested here or we lose the part invested. "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Mt. 6:24). To divide allegiance is to invite defeat; yea, to assure it (Mk. 3:24-26). God is jealous (Ex. 20:1-5), and will have either all or nothing (Mt. 22:37; Rm. 12:1,2; Jas. 4:4, Rev. 3:15-17).

Maturation period:

As with many high-yield, low risk accounts, the maturation period is lengthy. The benefits of Jesus' bank can only be reached after death (Heb. 9:27). Many lose interest at this point, because they live for the here and now, caring little for the there and then. How foolish! The "there and then" may be just around the corner (Lk. 12:20; Jas. 5:14). It will last forever, dwarfing this life by comparison (Mt. 25:41).

In reality, we don't actually own any money. God has entrusted some to us in stewardship (Mt. 25:14-30) and expects us to use it wisely (1 Cor. 4:2). With this in mind, should not we all make Jesus our Banker?

FROM THE EDITORS

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
1501 6th Avenue
Jasper, AL 35501

With this issue of *Words of Truth*, Brother Levi Sides and I will assume the role of co-editors of this great gospel paper. It shall be our aim and purpose to continue the policy set out in the very first issue in November, 1963. We count it an honor to be asked by the good elders of the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ to edit *Words of Truth*. We feel honored to be counted with those great and good men who have preceded us. These men have not deviated from the original policy. When this paper was in its infancy, multitudes of congregations mailed it to each of its members hoping it would be of some help in this quest for a greater knowledge of God's Word. It shall be one of our goals to promote this paper to that end. We believe every member of the Lord's Church should have at least one gospel paper coming into their home on a regular basis. Good reading material helps develop a

spiritual appetite for spiritual things.

We shall continue the policy to welcome articles written by faithful brethren. We believe that the articles that appear in this paper each week will enrich everyone's life. We encourage you to read the articles carefully and then pass them on to a friend. Paul told Timothy to, "...give attendance to reading" (I Timothy 4:13). If we can help you come to have a better knowledge of the Truth, our efforts will be crowned with joy unspeakable.

We feel it noteworthy to publish the original policy hoping it will underscore the purpose and aim of *Words of Truth*. (See "Editorial Policy" on page 3).

Glenn A. Posey

Three Cheers for Reggie White!

By Hayden Childs, Minister at Carbon Hill, Alabama, Church of Christ

You may have not cheered for Reggie White when he played college football for the University of Tennessee, nor when he played for the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles and Green Bay Packers. But I believe all Christians in America should be cheering for him now.

Reggie White is one of the all-time greats at his position on the football field. He was a Pro Bowl defensive end for 12 of his 13 seasons. He is also one of the main reasons the Green Bay Packers have participated in the past two Super Bowls.

However, due to injury Reggie recently announced his retirement from the sport he dominated for over a decade. With the Super Bowl win opportunities came his way outside of football via commercials for Nike, Edge Gel and Campbell's Soup.

In March of this year he addressed the Wisconsin State Assembly. Among his remarks were these, "All races and ethnic groups have gifts that can benefit society." He made a plea for racial harmony. Then he called homosexuality "one of the biggest sins" in the Bible.

"Homosexuality is a decision. It's not a race," he said, adding, "People from all different ethnic backgrounds live in this lifestyle. But all people from all different ethnic backgrounds are also liars, and cheaters, and malicious, and back stabbers."

His public stand for morality was denounced by many of this fans, major newspapers, Wisconsin legislators and

homosexual activists. Campbell's Soup did not renew their contract with him because of his comments.

Even a greater loss was suffered by White when CBS Sports withdrew an offer for him to be a football analyst for the network. The president of CBS Sports canceled because of the expected backlash from gay activists.

The football star told 20/20 he would not back down from his statements. "I am going to speak the truth...If people think that's contradiction and that's hate, they need to take them up with God, not Reggie White."

America needs more people with the courage and conviction of Reggie White. I commend him for his commitment to morality in our nation. I ask you to join me in giving three cheers to Reggie White!

God has spoken on this subject, so well defended by Reggie White. The Word says, "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination." (Leviticus 18:22) NKJ. The Holy Spirit led John to write while on Patmos Isle that the "abominable"... and "sexually immoral," would be among those who burn in hell. (Revelation 21:8) NKJ.

It is time for people of moral principle to stand up and be counted. Can we find within ourselves the same courage to stand for the right, even when it is not the "politically correct" thing to do? America needs more people like Reggie White!

Editorial Policy

December 6, 1963

Words of Truth

Gus Nichols

This being the first issue of *Words of Truth*, it is thought good to say a few words about the policy by which our new paper is to be moulded and fashioned. Just as congregations are determined to know what kind of preachers they invite to preach in their meetings they have a right to know what kind of paper or literature they bring into the congregation for reading and study.

The following shall be the policy by which *Words of Truth* is to be governed. Every writer should keep this policy in view in all his writings for the paper, so as to make his teaching and writing conform to this policy.

1. We want the truth, and nothing but the truth, taught in the paper. We want to make it true to its name *Words of Truth* (Acts 26:25). We have no confidence nor respect for error and false teaching. Only the truth can make men free and build up the church (Jn. 8:32) (Acts 20:32). We love people and shall always strive to please men in all things so long as no truth is to be compromised (1 Cor. 10:33).

We could not ignore any truth to please men and be servants of Christ (Gal., 1:10). We claim no infallibility of our own, but we do believe that the Bible is the infallible word of God (2 Tim. 3:15-17). We propose to be governed by the word of God in all matters of faith. This was the basis of unity taught by the apostles and agreed upon by the pioneers of the restoration movement (Jude 3; 1 Cor. 16:13; 2 Cor. 13:5-6; Heb. 12:2; Phil. 1:27).

In matters of opinion, or of expediency, where God has left things to human judgment, we propose to leave men free to exercise their liberty of choice. Where God left something loosed, we shall not either bind it, or submit to any human law binding it. Neither shall we loose what God has bound (Matt. 16:19). We believe the word of God is all the religious guide needed in matters of faith. We propose nothing as terms of unity and fellowship other than faith in Christ and loving obedience to him in all things (Heb. 5:8-9). However, this includes much more than many have ever comprehended it to embrace.

2. It shall be the policy of *Words of Truth* to present a well-balanced type of teaching, the subject matter to be determined by the need of our times and of any demanding occasion and circumstance. We want the reading of the paper to contribute to a well informed, happy and united membership in any church into which it is permitted to come.

3. We shall encourage our local preachers and others to write for *Words of Truth*. This will in itself be good training for them, and make the paper interesting to the friends of these writers. Mature Christians are quick to be patient with beginners and to rejoice in their visible progress. The crying need of the Church is for an efficient leadership, and this can not be had without the training of experience and work. Of course, we solicit good, strong articles from brethren everywhere who are loyal to the truth, both in teaching and practice.

4. It shall be our guiding purpose to make *Words of Truth* conform to the principles of good journalism. Therefore, we shall strive to be courteous and kind in dealing with sin and sinners, as well as in our discussion of all matters where prejudice and tempers may be involved. But, this does not mean that the truth will be watered down and make ineffective. We realize the fact that the truth in its own right and power is often blunt and painful as well as sharper than any two-edged sword. But we do not wish to get between the truth and the people and hinder its work of conversion and transformation by detracting from its power (Acts 14:1).

5. In our dealings with others and in matters of controversy, we shall strive to be governed by the "Golden Rule" to treat others as we would like to be treated (Matt. 7:12). If our teaching of the truth provokes controversy and the need arises for our defense of the gospel (Phil. 1:17). We shall continue in its defense long enough to get the job done, and then return to the main line of teaching the truth in a positive sort of way.

6. We shall keep in mind the only scriptural objective in publishing such a paper, and that is, to do all the good possible, and no harm whatsoever. We shall strive to make the paper a real blessing to all who may read it. We actually believe it will build up the members of the church so that they will give more, pray more, and live more nearly like Jesus lived, and if it does this, it will more than pay for itself, even in dollars and cents. The teaching program of the Lord for his church is the greatest program in the world (Matt. 28:19-20) Mk. 16:15; I Tim. 3:15). The farmer who is too stingy to plant enough seed will pay dearly for his lack of vision and unwillingness to invest. He must sow bountifully in order to reap bountifully. Brethren will do more, live right and do better when they are taught better. To this end we launch our paper in earnest, fervent prayer and solicit your confidence, your influence and support.

7. The paper will be printed and mailed out directly to each home in the subscription list furnished by congregations taking the paper, and

be published only four weeks per month, the bill to be paid by the church on the first of the following month after the paper is received. The church may send it to as many neighbors and friends as wish to receive it, and simply include them in its list of subscribers.

Churches which take the paper will be getting it at printer's cost, and not a penny of profit will be received by any one, or any congregation from the paper. We write and do our work free of charge and subscribing churches simply pay for the cost of printing and mailing the paper.

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

Vol. 35 No. 24

June 11, 1998

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CONSISTENCY
WITHIN THINE OWN POWER
IMPROVING ATTITUDES WITHIN
THE CHURCH
HOW DO YOU WANT TO BE
TREATED?

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSISTENCY

Brian Wakefield

As most people see it today, the worth or greatness of something is demonstrated in how consistently it performs its purpose. A good, dependable car is one that starts, runs, and drives the same way on a day-to-day basis without troubles. A great quarterback is a player who is consistent in his play, completes passes, and carries out the instructions of his coach.

Consistency, by our own standards, is a crucial element in being considered "good." We want our children to consistently bring home good grades, and we require our employees and fellow workers to be consistent on the job. With all this talk about consistency, we sometimes forget an important question - am I consistently living my life for Christ? When people see my life, do they consistently see someone who stands for the truth and demonstrates love? Keeping in mind that Christianity requires us to be responsible for our own actions, let's take a look at "consistency."

In order to live consistently, we must know our purpose. Our Lord said in the sermon on the mount, "*Ye are the light of the world*" (Matthew 5:14). Our purpose is to spread the gospel of light in a world of spiritual darkness. In 1 Corinthians 1:21, we read that "*it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*" God not only chose preaching to save the lost, but he also chose us to do the preaching! Later on in Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth, Paul says, "*I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase*" (1 Corinthians 3:6). We preach the gospel of Christ to them that are lost, and whether we plant the seed or water the plant, all the glory goes to God! Glorifying God should motivate us to live as consistent to the word of God as possible.

Secondly, in order to live consistently, we must know our **debt**. In Romans 3:23 we read, "*for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*" Every man is a sinner and in need of God's grace and forgiveness. Before we can strive to be consistent with the perfect word of God, we must first understand that we are imperfect and are saved by God's grace. Because of our sin, we are not worthy of eternal life, and because of that amazing blessing, we owe our lives to our father.

Lastly, in order to live our lives consistently, we must know our **Lord**. The only man to walk this earth and lead a perfect, sinless life was our Lord Jesus Christ. He left us with an awesome example of Christian living. Of course, we will never be able to live as he did, but part of being a Christian is striving to walk as he walked. Peter, in writing about the day of the Lord, charges the brethren to "*be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless*" (II Peter 3:14). Being blameless is to live your life in such a way as to give no one a reason to blame you for any wrongdoing. In other words, to live as consistently as possible.

We have all heard the saying, "practice what you preach." How important that is! Your life is what confirms the gospel that you preach as being the truth to people who know not God. How can we speak of the love of God if it is not evident in our own lives? Our prayer should be that we, as Christians, strive to live our lives consistently.

(Brian is a senior Bible major at Faulkner University)

FROM THE EDITORS

Glenn A. Posey

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WITHIN THINE OWN POWER

Luke says, "But a certain man named Anaias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? while it remained, was it not thine own? And after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God" (Acts 5:1-4). Note the two questions: Was it not thine own? And, Was it not in thine own power?

1. Your body is within your own power. Paul said, "Neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin" (Romans 6:13). Actually our bodies belong to God. He has just loaned them to us for a while (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). But, everyone makes a decision how the physical body is used. It is "within thine own power."

2. Your talent is within your own power. No accountable being is empty handed of talent. It is obvious that some have more talent than others, but God expects each person to do what he can, in keeping with his talent (Matthew 25:14-30). Use your talents for the "glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

3. Your money is within your own power. Just remember, "For the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). Solomon said, "There is a sore evil, which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt" (Ecclesiastes 5:13). Jesus said, "He which is faithful in that which is least is also faithful in much" (Luke 16:10).

4. Your influence is within your own power. The Bible says, "For none of us liveth unto himself and no man dieth unto himself" (Romans 14:7). Man is not an island within himself. Your influence is like your shadow, it is there, either for good or bad. Just remember it is within your own power.

5. Your soul is within your own power. You can either save it or loose it (Matthew 16:24-26). God wants you to save it (2 Peter 3:9). But, it is your decision or choice, it is within your own power. Obey the gospel and be saved (Romans 1:16).

The decision/choice is within your own power. God said, "...I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore choose life" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

IMPROVING ATTITUDES WITHIN THE CHURCH

1. Remind yourself over and over that you are not perfect, therefore, you would not fit into a congregation of perfect people, if such a congregation existed.

2. Instead of picking out the worldly hypocritical members of the church to point to, pick out the sincere, dedicated, spiritual members and thank God for them.

3. If you are old, treat the young with the consideration you desired as a young person. If you are young, treat the old with the respect you will want when you are old.

4. When you are tempted to criticize the elders, deacons, minister, Bible teachers, and other Christians,

pray earnestly for them first. This will not only have an effect upon them, but it will do wonders for your own attitude.

5. When you see work being neglected, instead of being critical roll up your sleeves and get to work.

6. Never blame others for your own failures. Every individual can be faithful to God in spite of the bad examples and discouraging attitudes of others, if he/she is determined to be.

7. Remind yourself everyday that the only way you can improve the world and church is to begin with yourself. Make self-improvement a daily goal for yourself.

HOW DO YOU WANT TO BE TREATED?

Mike Benson

“Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and The Prophets” (Matthew 7:12). The “Golden Rule.” While it may not be possible to get the world to put this principle into action, imagine what a difference it would make if the church would do so. Consider the following:

How we treat others, regardless of how they treat us, is an expression of the depth of our FAITH. A deep and abiding faith expresses itself in ACTS OF LOVE. Love -- even when our first inclination may be to fight back. *“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails...” (1 Cor. 13:4-8a). John urged, “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in DEED and in Truth” (1 Jn. 3:18).*

A weak and shallow faith expresses itself in ACTS OF VENGEANCE. When we do not show love to our enemies but strike back at them, we are usurping God’s prerogative to mete out justice. *“O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongs...” (Psm. 94:1a; cf. Nah. 1:2). “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves; but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Rom. 12:19). Man is incapable and unqualified to mete out justice on his own. He doesn’t have all the information. He wants to “get even,” and then some. Returning evil for evil is the practice of the world; returning good for evil should be the practice of the church. “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven...For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:43-45a, 46-48).*

How we treat others, regardless of how they treat us, is an expression of the SINCERITY of

our heart. Sincerity expresses itself in SELFLESSNESS. The golden rule always seeks the highest good of others (Lk. 10:30-37). Paul told the church at Philippi, *“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself” (Phil. 2:3).*

Hypocrisy expresses itself in SELFISHNESS. *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone” (Matt. 23:23).*

I knelt to pray when day was done,
And prayed, “Lord, bless everyone;
Lift from each heart the pain,
And let the sick be well again.”
And then I woke again one day,
And carelessly went on my way;
The whole day long I did not try
To wipe a tear from any eye.
I did not try to share the load
Of any brother on the road;
I did not even go to see
The sick man just next door to me.
Yet once again when every day was done,
I prayed, “Lord, bless everyone.”
But as I prayed to my ear
Came a voice that whispered dear,
“Pause, hypocrite, before you pray,
Whom have you tried to bless today?
God’s sweetest blessings always go,
By hands that serve Him here below.”
And then I hid my face and cried,
“Forgive me Lord, for I have lied;
Let me but live another day,
And I live the way I pray.”

How we treat others, regardless of how they treat us, is an expression of our SUBMISSION To God. Submission expresses itself in OBEDIENCE. The golden rule says, “No matter how you treat me, I’m going to treat you the way I would like to be treated.” *“For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer for it, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps ‘Who committed no sin, nor was guilty*

HOW DO YOU WANT TO BE TREATED?, *continued from Page 3*

found in His mouth' who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Pet. 2:20-23; cf. Lk. 23:34; Acts 7:60; 2 Tim. 4:16; Rom. 12:20-21).

Some years ago, an article appeared in The Reader's Digest which advanced this important truth. It was entitled, "Anyway":

People are unreasonable, illogical and self-centered.

Love them anyway.

If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives. Do good anyway.

If you are successful, you will win false friends and true enemies. Succeed anyway.

Honesty and frankness make you vulnerable. Be honest and frank anyway.

The biggest people with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest people with the smallest minds. Think big anyway.

People favor underdogs but follow only top dogs.

Fight for some underdogs anyway.

What you spent years building may be destroyed overnight. Build anyway.

Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth. Give the world the best you've got anyway.

While submission expresses itself in obedience, rebellion is SIN (1 Jn. 5:17a). The golden rule is not some cafeteria-style principle which we can choose not to follow (Matt. 5:38-42). Our Lord did not give His life on Calvary so that we could live as we so choose. Rather, He died in order to provide us with an opportunity to live as God chooses for us (2 Tim. 3:12). Dear Christian, please remember this -- ill-treatment at the hands of others (including and especially our own brethren) does not license you to sin (Acts 16:16-25; 1 Cor. 6:6-7) in return!

We cannot mistreat others and then expect them to treat us kindly in return (Acts 8:3; 1 Tim. 1:13; Acts 9:26-27). *How do you want to be treated? With compassion? With understanding? With forgiveness? Then how do you treat others? Think about it.*

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

Vol. 35 No. 25

June 18, 1998

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:
THREE RESPONSES TO A
SERMON
THE REAL CAUSE OF
ABSENTEE-ISM
OUTRAGEOUS

THREE RESPONSES TO A SERMON

Acts 17:32,34

Jason R. Roberts

At the conclusion of Paul's remarkable sermon on Mars Hill we find three responses from his hearers. Unfortunately two were bad and one was good. The first reaction comes immediately following Paul's invitation: *"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead, some mocked" (v.32).* The word "mocked" means to deride or, to joke about. The Athenians mocked at the message Paul was proclaiming to them, Why? Because his preaching was plain and persuasive. Here was a city "wholly given to idolatry" (v.16). They were listening to this "new message" (cf. v.21) with rapt attention. But as soon as Paul pointed out to them that all men everywhere were accountable to the God of heaven, (by virtue of the resurrected Christ), and not to the gods in which they had devised with their own hands, they were offended. Do we not see this same response from some today? They may enjoy hearing everything the preacher is saying, until he says something about the sins of social drinking, dancing, and why we need to attend services, etc., and they turn him off like they're turning off tap water. They mock him. He becomes the subject of Sunday's lunch conversation with our children. They become offended at the very message that was intended to help and save them. It may be the essentiality of baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). It may be repentance, the Bible's teaching on marriage and divorce and a host of other things. You mark it down, when a gospel preacher preaches the word of God as he's supposed to, somebody is going to mock and cry that there toes have been stepped on.

Jesus was confronted by this very idea in His day. In Matt. 15 those hypocritical scribes and Pharises were told by Jesus, *"These people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips;*

but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (Matt. 15:8-9). Notice what the disciples said, *"...Knowest thou that the Parisees were **offended**, after they heard this saying? (v.12).* What did Jesus say? Did he apologize for telling them what they needed to hear? Did he water it down to make it easier to swallow? Listen to his response, *"But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."* Jesus did not say this for the sake of offending them, and not should we in our preaching and teaching. They were offended at the message they needed to hear. In Matt. 19:16-22 we have the account of the rich young ruler who came asking Jesus, *"...Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"* Jesus, knowing the hearts of all men (John 2:25), pointed out this man's sin by instructing him to, *"...go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (v.21).* Notice the ruler's reaction to the message, *"But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions" (v.22).* What did our Lord do? Did he apologize to this rich man? Did he chase him down saying, "I tell you what, how about just half your possessions? I didn't mean to upset you, let me make it easier for you?" No our Lord did not say such. Jesus Christ is not going to stretch the demands of discipleship one iota! So let people mock on. Let them ridicule, jeer and sneer at the message, but pay day, judgment day is coming. The Bible teaches us that *"Fools make a mock at sin..." (Prov. 14:9). "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7).*

A second response that some have toward a sermon is they will procrastinate. Some mocked at the

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FROM THE EDITORS

Glenn A. Posey

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THE REAL CAUSE OF ABSENTEE-ISM

The person who is a Christian became one by the new birth (John 3:5; I Peter 1:22,23; 2 Corinthians 5:17). The newly born Christians are new creatures in Christ. They are to have new aims and goals in their lives. Paul said, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1,2). Unfortunately, many "new creatures" do not grow and mature. They are not faithful in their attendance, or committed in their work for the Lord. They are so vulnerable to Satan's devices. They become open prey for the "roaring lion" which is Satan (I Peter 5:7-8).

Every member of the church is responsible for whatever he/she can do for the glory of God and the growth of the church for which Christ died (Acts 20:28). Even the smallest little wheel in your watch has a job to do, and is expected to fulfill its responsibility. Paul likens the church to a physical body, and shows how important each member is to the whole body (I Corinthians 12:12-32). When some of the members of a local church are not faithful to the services and work of the church, that local church suffers and a lot of work goes lacking.

What are some of the causes of absenteeism? Perhaps the causes of absenteeism lie more deeply buried than it appears on the surface. Let us notice some of the real reasons or causes of "absentism". Perhaps we have been trying to cure the symptom rather than the real problem or cause that plagues so many local congregations.

1. **A Lack of Spirituality.** Many members in the Corinthian church had this problem. Note what the apostle said about them, "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ (I Corinthians 3:1). In other words, the church was not first in their lives. Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matthew 6:33). The "kingdom" in this passage is the "church". The person who lacks spirituality had rather be with the Devil's goats than with the Lord's sheep (Matthew 25:31-46). Christians must grow spiritually (I Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18). Every member desperately needs

spiritual help that comes from the services on the first day of the week, and the extra services also. This is one of the main causes of absenteeism. We are what we are without, because of what we are within. Bigness comes from within.

2. **A Lack of Faith.** Christian's are in a spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6). They desperately need a strong faith in God and His word. Paul said, "So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Satan knows that if he can "choke the word of God out of Christians hearts and lives", then he can cause them to be unfruitful members of the church (Mark 4:19; Luke 8:14). A good definition of faith is, "Trust that manifests itself in obedience." A Christian should believe what he believes and be committed to the same. Satan wants every Christian to believe less and less in God's word. This is one of the causes of absenteeism.

3. **A Lack of Consecration and Commitment to The Lord's Service.** Those Christians who do not make every effort possible to attend all the services of the church are lacking in love and zeal for the Lord's church (Revelation 2:4,5; 3:15-19; Titus 2:11-14). Too many Christians are committed only to themselves. They love only themselves (2 Timothy 3:2). This is obvious to every member of the local church. Christians are called in on the first day of the week to "worship God in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23,24). To be absent from those services is to manifest one's real attitude. Every week begins with the "first day". Christ loved the church and died for it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 20:28). How much should the church mean to its members? What does it mean to you? The church is a spiritual family. Members of that family should prefer to be with every other member!

All of us have heard the old adage, "if every member of the church were just like me, what kind of church would the Lord's church be?" Be faithful to all the services of the church. It's your obligation (Heb. 10:25).

THREE RESPONSES TO A SERMON, *Continued from page 1*

resurrection, but "others said, We will hear thee again of this *matter*" (v.32b) They procrastinated. They put off for tomorrow what they should have done right then. Someone has well said, "one good thing about procrastination is that the individual always has something to look forward to the next day." Well this may be humorous in secular matters, but it is dangerous when it comes to spiritual matters! Notice that the Athenians said, *We WILL hear thee again of this matter*" (emp. added, JRR). There is no evidence, Biblical or historical, that suggests they had another chance to hear the gospel Paul preached to them. Evidently they were certain that they would hear another invitation to obey the gospel. After all, we have Sunday night, Wednesday night, and even next Sunday to respond to the Lord's invitation! Why be baptized today? Why be restored today when you can do it tomorrow? We have a lease on life anyway. The Bible teaches no such thing. David said, "...*there is but a step between me and death*" (1 Sam. 20:3). We sing that hymn, "Its only a step" but the point of that wonderful song is: It is only step from you to the Lord. It is only a step for one to be buried with his Lord in his spiritual grave which is baptism (Rom. 6:3-4). Tragically, it is only a step between man and his physical grave. And most people will die and go to their physical grave having never died to sin by going to their spiritual grave!

We do not have a guarantee of tomorrow in this life. "*Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is our life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*" (James 4:14). Like a breath on a frosty morning, so is man's life on earth. Here for a moment and gone the next. The time to obey the gospel, the time to get one's

life right with the Lord is today.

Felix was a man who thought he had time (Acts 24:24-26). He was a man of convenience. Paul preached to him what he needed to hear, and Felix said, "*Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee*" (Acts 24:25b). The most convenient time for a person to obey the gospel is the *moment they hear it and realize they're lost!* Paul said, "...*behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation*" (2 Cor. 6:2).

A third response that some have toward a sermon is belief. Some mocked, Some procrastinated. "*Howbeit certain men clave unto him and believed*" (v.34). The word "clave" simply means that they glued themselves to the message. They had the good and honest heart of which Jesus spoke in Luke 8:15. They "*obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered*" unto them (Rom. 6:17). They were like the Ethiopian Eunuch, who upon hearing Jesus preached and subsequently was baptized, "went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39). They had reason to rejoice by virtue of the fact that they had responded to the good news of the gospel that set them free from the bondage of sin. And such is the case of everyone who believes and obeys the Bible.

Into which category do you fall dear friend? Are you one who mocks at the very message which is able to save your soul (James 1:21b)? Are you one who is looking for a more convenient day to obey the gospel of Christ? Or are you one who has a good and honest heart, who sincerely believes the truth of God's word, and responds accordingly?

Bible Study

John H. Banister

IN OUR STUDY of any Bible subject, we need to keep several simple rules in mind. Concerning whatever passage of scripture we are studying, we should ask ourselves the following questions:

Who Is Speaking?

Is it God or Satan, Christ or his critics? We must not make the mistake of assuming that everything in the bible is true. The Bible is a true (inspired) account of everything recorded therein, but not every statement found in the Bible is true. When Satan said to Eve, "Thou shalt not die," he did not speak the truth.

To Whom Is He Speaking?

To the patriarchs, the Jews under the Law, or to Christians under the gospel? Many people become greatly confused in Bible study because they fail to properly divide the Word (2 Timothy 2:15).

What Is the Subject Under Discussion?

Is the writer speaking of the coming of Christ or of the fact that he has already come? Is he speaking of the requirements of the Mosaic Law or of the commands of the gospel of Christ?

What Does the Context Teach?

All Bible truths must be interpreted in the light of their context. To take a passage out of its setting and make it say what the writer never said is to miserably pervert the Scriptures.

What Do Other Books of the Bible Teach on This Same Subject?

Run the references and ascertain just what other Bible writers have said. All truth is harmonious and, when compared, it will be seen that truth never contradicts itself.

OUTRAGEOUS

David Sain

When television and movies influence a child to curse and tell vulgar stories, that is lamentable! But, when the child learns such by listening to mom and dad, that is **outrageous!**

When, by example, society "teaches" a child to cheat and lie, that is saddening! But, when the child is taught such by mom and dad's examples, that is **outrageous!**

When culture influences a child to feel that others are to blame for his faults and troubles, that is grievous! But, when the child learns such from mom and dad, that is **outrageous!**

When television and video tapes promote premarital sex as *acceptable behavior*, that is deplorable! But, when mom and dad "invite" such into the home, that is **outrageous!**

Will you compromise this summer?

Randy Kea

Christians should be watchful at all times for temptations that come their way (James 1:13-15). We should always "resist" and take the "way of escape" (I Pet. 5:7-9; I Cor. 10:12-14).

The summer season always brings strong temptations to compromise God's truth. First, brethren are tempted to disrobe. Warmer weather is no excuse to dress immodestly. I am convinced that this is one of the most serious problems the Lord's church faces today. We cannot dress like the world and please the Lord (Matt. 5:28; I Tim. 2:8-10; I Jn. 2:15-17).

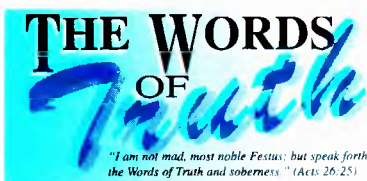
Second, some are tempted to take the money that they have "purposed" to give to the Lord and

spend it on other things. We should determine that we will do our best to follow through on the promise and purpose that we made concerning our giving (II. Cor. 8, 9).

Third, many are tempted to "forsake" the assembly of the saints. Brethren take vacations just like everyone else. There is nothing wrong with taking a break from our work. We all need this. However, we are always Christians (even during the summer). We can never "take a vacation" from our service and worship to the Lord (Heb. 10:19-28; I Cor. 15:58). Let us plan ahead to be in worship even when we travel.

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Vol. 35 No. 26

June 25, 1998

We May Need To Change

by Steve Higginbotham

In recent months, I have overheard several people say that they would be rich if they had a penny for ever time someone mentioned the word change.' It's true. There is a lot of talk in the church these days about change. Some of the change that is being proposed is irresponsible and unbiblical.. And of course, In such instances, God's people must resist with all their might, and having done all' to stand (Ephesians 6:13).

However, before we completely dismiss the notion that there is a need to change, consider the following:

- If we are not seeking the kingdom of God first, we need to change our priorities (Matthew 6: 33).
- If we rarely think of heaven, we need to change our perspective (Hebrews 11:13).
- If we have not been baptized into Christ, we need to change our status (1 John 3:14; 2 Corinthians 5:17).
- If we are persisting in any sin, we need to change our actions (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).
- If we pass up opportunities to grow spiritually by neglecting the assemblies of the saints, we need to change our love (1 John 2:15).
- If our sins do not grieve us, we need to change our view of sin (Romans 6:23; 5:8).
- If our friends are leading us farther and farther away from a close relationship with God, then we need to change our friends (1 Corinthians 15:33).
- If we discover we have been wrong on some doctrinal point we need to change our mind (Acts 18:24-28).
- If we find we have little or no time to pray, we need to change our schedules.

(1Thessalonians 5: 1 7).

- If we are not diligent students of the Bible, we need to change our habits (2 Timothy 2:15).
- If we are not the kind of spouse we should be, we need to change our conduct (1 Peter 3:1).
- If we are giving support, aid, and backing to someone who is attacking the church and the authority of the Scriptures, we need to change our fellowship (Ephesians 5:11).
- If our dress is not the kind of dress that is modest and does not express our godliness, we need change our clothes (1 Timothy 2:10; Revelation 3:5).
- If we are not giving the Lord our very best, we need to change our sacrifice (Romans 12:1).
- If our language is not always pure and truthful, we need to change our heart (Matthew 15:18).
- If we are not merciful, forgiving, and longsuffering with others, we need to change our attitude (James 2:13).

Do you see the point? Change isn't a bad word. Change is sometimes needed and often necessary if we are to be pleasing to God. The task that lies ahead of us is one of discernment. We need to distinguish between the changes that God expects us to make and the changes that would displease God. Discerning the difference is not to be found in what pleases men, what draws the largest crowds, or what appears more user friendly, but is to be found in the word of God.

The next time you hear the word "change" mentioned, don't cringe and turn everything off. Remember that there are some areas in our lives in which we all would do well to change.

FROM THE EDITORS

Levi Sides

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FORGIVENESS IS THE BEST OPTION

No doubt the Scriptures teach it. "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ, God forgave you" (Eph. 4:32). But sometimes its hard for me to do what I know the Scriptures teach. But when you examine the options, you know that God's solution to mistreatment is the best. You may ask "What are my options?" There are only three:

- 1. DENY IT.** Try to act as if it did not happen. Try to forget it by suppressing it. Not only is this potentially dangerous psychologically it's just about impossible.
- 2. GO FOR REVENGE.** Scriptures warn about this. "Do not repay anyone evil for evil's (Rom. 12:17). Revenge is self-defeating. Families often suffer from one vengeful act leading to another, and another. Also, most often you will find that revenge is not nearly as sweet as you thought it would be.
- 3. FORGIVE.** Our Lord knew what was best for us when He told us to forgive. We grew- up knowing He said to turn the other cheek,, but often make fun of His statement. But healing will not come to us if we do not learn to forgive. You allow the party who hurt

you, to continue to do damage if you do not forgive The only way to stop the hurt and start the healing process is by forgiving.

When you look at your options, and these are the only ones you have, then forgiveness is not only Scriptural, and practical, but it is your best option.

How can I forgive? Its not an easy thing to do. Three suggestions:

- 1. REVISE YOUR THINKING ABOUT THE PERSON.** Your first picture centers on the hurt he/she administered to you. Look for something good about them. Give them the benefit of the doubt, realize they may be under great strain at home, job, etc.
- 2. WHEN YOU THINK DIFFERENTLY YOU'LL FEEL DIFFERENTLY.** This will cause the feeling of hate to begin to dissolve. You may find yourself actually feeling sorry for the person, much in the way you try to understand one who is sick.
- 3. GIVE UP YOUR RIGHT TO GET EVEN.** You cannot undo whets been done As Jesus is the model for my life I will try to follow Him. On the cross he prayed, "Father forgive them..." May we really learn that forgiveness is the best option.

There Are No Surrogate Christians

Eddie Whitten

"For I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethen's sake. " (Rom. 9:3)

There may be some legitimate application for surrogacy, but surrogate wives and surrogate mothers is not one of them! Both ungodly activities are practiced today with almost unanimous acceptance, especially as it pertains to motherhood, One only needs to read God's word concerning the relationship of marriage to understand that these "substitutes" do not, and cannot, be in harmony with Christian principles.

Many seem to have the idea that even in the church surrogacy is legal and legitimate. Jesus told us to teach (Mt. 28:19), but the majority of the members expect "someone else" to do it for them. James tells us to visit (Jas. 1:27), but most mem-

bers expect "others" to do it for them. Jesus built the church for His people, but the vest majority of its members are not involved in any of its work - let "others" be their surrogate.

One day, the Lord is coming to bring the world to a close)II Pet. 3}. There is going to be a judgment (Jn 12 48). Every man is going to have to give account for the deeds done in the flesh whether good or had (II Cor. 5:10).. It is going to be at that time that many who claim to be "good Christians" are going to be !looking desperately for a surrogate, but there will be none to be found. isn't there some way !to encourage every reader to get personally involved in working in some way in the church? As much as we may want it differently, there are no surrogate Christians!

HAS IT COME TO THIS?

Bob Plunket

A great Polish tragedienne was touring this country and was begged at a dinner party to relate one of her great tragedies. She refused saying she needed lights, background, dress, but the audience persisted So she decided to perform. She told them she would do the tragedy in her native tongue and this was fine as long as they could see and hear her.

When she finished the tragedy some were in tears, others were awed. They were so moved they wanted to know the nature of the tragedy in their own language. Then she told them with a smile that she had counted to a hundred in Polish and there was no story at all.

Has the worship of some come to this? I listened to a preacher the other night who had taken off his coat. He was sweating, wiping his face, crawling

on the floor, and at times speaking in tongues. People were crying and waving their hands in the air. Is this what our generation is looking for? Is this what some in the churches of Christ are imitating? Whatever happened substance and teaching? Are we looking for some kind of emotional high even if it is equivalent to counting to a hundred in Polish?

The emphasis doesn't seem to be on the message but on the messenger. It's not the old gospel but theatrics that people seem to want. It doesn't seem to matter that people don't understand what's going on or whether or not it's the truth, just thrill us, excite us.

I doubt if the betrayal and death of Jesus on the cross would have brought the tears as counting to a hundred in Polish. How sad!

THANKS TO SENIORS SAINTS

Allen Webster

No person or group of people hears the sweet words "THANK YOU" as often as they desire or deserve. Perhaps this is more true with those who are older and out of the limelight of a hurry-up world The Bible places a high premium on gratitude (2 Thes. 2: 13) and has much to say about the value of aging and older people:

"The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness" (Prov. 16 31:3). "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head - , and honour the face of the old man..." (Lev. 19:32). "The righteous... shall bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing" (Psa 92:12-14).

We, as the younger generation, thank you for setting the proper example for us. It is always easier to follow an example than it is a precept, and we appreciate you for leading us in following God You make a declaration with your life: similar to the one Joshua made with his lips in his farewell speech, " but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (24:15) You may underestimate this or not even recognize it, but younger members are looking to you to lead the way.

We, As the younger generation, thank you for remaining faithful through the years The faith of every saint is tested throughout the course of the Christian race (Heb.12:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:12), but you have

many to weather these storms and not look back (Lk. 9:62). Now when the seas of our lives become rough, we know that we can make it because you have remained constant in similar circumstances.

We, as the younger generation, thank you for continuing to do all you can for the Lord. We know that you attend services when you really do not feel like it, and it inspires us to greater service. It may be you cannot do all that you used to but you do what you can. "She hath done what she could" (Mk 14:8) pleased the Lord then and it will today. We look to your wisdom (Job 12:12) and good judgment (1 Kgs. 12:6-8) while valuing your abilities.

Some of the mighty servants of God did their greatest work after they - were increased in years. Noah had lived six hundred years before God called him, Abraham and Sarah were almost a century old when Isaac was born, Caleb cried "give me this mountain" when he was old and Moses did not even start to lead the Israelites until he was eighty!

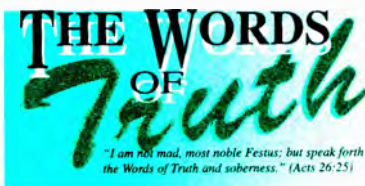
Senior saints we love you and owe you a great deal. By watching your life we can see that the "winter of life" can be one of the most productive periods for the child of God. May the Lord richly bless you is our prayer.

TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR YOUTH

1. Don't let your parents down, they brought you up,
2. Choose your companions with care; you become what they are.
- 3 Be master of your habits, or they will master you.
4. Treasure your time; don't spent it, invest it.
5. Stand for something, or you'll fall for anything.
6. Select only a date who would make a good mate.
7. See what you can do for others; not what they can do for you.
8. Guard your thoughts; what you think, you are.
- 9 Don't fill up on this world's crumbs; feed your soul on the Living Bread.
10. Give your all to Christ; He gave His for you.

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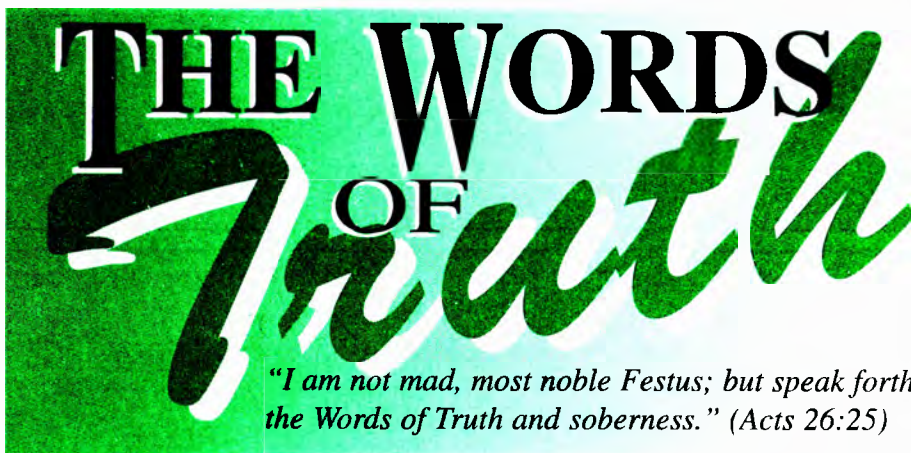
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Vol. 35 No. 27

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July 2, 1998

Some Things Take Time...

Dale Jenkins

Eugene Patterson says in his book *"A Long Obedience Same Direction"*. "...One aspect of world that I have been able to identify as harmful to Christians is the assumption that anything worthwhile can be acquired at once."

The age/world we live in has taught us that if something can be done, then, by it's very nature it can be done better, faster, with less effort. But our age has sold us a bill of goofs. Not everything is microwavable.. Not everything can be honed down to a fine assembly line art that makes it quick and easy. Some things take time. And the idea that every thing is easy teas produced a large crop of quitters. I saw a T-shirt the other day that symbolized our culture pretty succinctly. It said: "When the going gets tough...I'm outta here."

Some things take time...

Marriage. A good marriage is not built overnight. In a day when people see no stigma with divorce it takes an even greater commitment to stay together. Quitting is the easy, convenient and quick way away from a spouse who isn't everything you wish they were. People divorce today over things a generation or two ago they just worked out, or learned to live with. Don't misquote me, I have not said it is always wrong to quit. These are times that even God says it's fine to end a marriage, but let's keep within His guidelines.

Friendships. Friendships are the oil that keeps us running. Without people in our lives who we are accountable to we might never reach a goal and life becomes much less sweet. But friendships take time to build. They take a commitment to another "imperfect" person.

Fellowship. You do not become a solid part of a church just by attending the services. Some people grip that churches are cliquish, but fail to take advantage of opportunities to become a part of the fellowship of churches. I've seen people personally invited to a

church gathering who refuse to come and later accuse a church of being cliquish To be a part of the sweetest fellowship in the world, Christian fellowship, takes time and effort. Fellowship is an investment of give and take of growing over time, of just being together to get to know each others needs and likes and dislikes..

Spiritual Maturity. Some people can never understand why they don't feel close to God and point fingers in all directions. They blame elders, preachers, family member and even God but fail to evaluate how much practical effort they are exerting. I venture to say that of those who do not feel close to God less than 5% have for a committed period of time invested even an hour A day to their spiritual lives. You don't pray and study and share God's Word and work on your attitude and serve others in love and you will not be close to God. But those things are not easy and few will commit the necessary investment for them.

Ministry. Most preachers and churches go through a cycle that includes love for each other, dreaming of what can be, frustration over goals not immediately met, falling out, and moving on. No wonder so many church members have feelings of distrust for preachers and so many preachers get burned out. They have not invested the time necessary to learn that while each are imperfect, each also can contribute to the growth of the church if the effort and time are given. Most every study I have seen shows that churches grow greatest after a minister has been with them twenty years, but few of us are willing to invest more than 2 or 3 years together. The average stay is somewhere around 18 months.

Some things take time! What are you investing in? (Matthew 6:33, Luke 9:23, Hebrew 3:13, Acts 2:46, 5:42, 17:11).

FROM THE EDITORS

Levi Sides

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THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

AFTER MOVING INTO A LARGE CITY, A CHRISTIAN FAMILY VISITED FIVE CHURCHES OF CHRIST FROM WHICH THEY WOULD SELECT ONE CONGREGATION IN WHICH THEY COULD WORK AND WORSHIP GOD. TO THEIR AMAZEMENT EACH CHURCH WAS DIFFERENT IN MISSION.

AS WE FUNCTION IN THE CHURCH AND PLAN THE PROGRAMS OF THE LOCAL CHURCH, A PRIMARY QUESTION WHICH NEEDS TO BE ASKED IS - WHAT IS THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH? IN OTHER WORDS, WHAT IS THE CHURCH TO BE DOING? WHAT ARE THE SPIRITUAL MANDATES FOR THE CHURCH?

SEVERAL CAN BE SUGGESTED: (1) TO GLORIFY GOD, (2) TO EDIFY ITSELF, (3) TO PURIFY ITSELF. (4) TO EDUCATE ITS CONSTITUENCY (5) TO EVANGELIZE THE WORLD, (6) TO ACT AS A RESTRAINING AND ENLIGHTENING FORCE IN THE WORLD. AND, (7) TO PROMOTE ALL THAT IS GOOD.

(1) TO GLORIFY GOD. (ROM. 15:5,9; EPH.. 1:5. 12. 14, 18 3:21; II THESS.. 1:12; I PET. 4:11). SO FUNDAMENTAL IS THIS DUTY THAT IF FAITHFULLY PERFORMED, THERE WILL ALSO BE THE CARRYING OUT OF THE OTHER PURPOSES OF THE CHURCH.

(2) TO EDIFY ITSELF. (EPH.. 4:12-16). CLEARLY, THIS MEANS THE INDOCTRINATION OF THE CHURCH MEMBERS. IN ORDER THAT THEY MATURE TO THE FULLEST AND BE ABLE TO STAND AGAINST THE FALSE DOCTRINES AROUND THEM, TO DEVELOP THE GRACES OF GOD IN THEM, AND TO TEACH THEM TO COOPERATE WITH ONE ANOTHER IN THE SERVICE OF CHRIST.

(3) TO PURIFY ITSELF. (EPH.. 5:25). THERE IS A PURGING THAT THE FATHER PREFORMS. (JOHN 15:2), THERE IS A PURGING THE BELIEVER SHOULD PERFORM. (1 COR..

11:28-31), BUT THERE IS ALSO PURGING THAT THE LOCAL CHURCH IS ASKED TO PERFORM (MATT. 18:17). THE EARLY CHURCH PROVIDES AN EXAMPLE FOR THE CARRYING OUT OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE AND THE PRESENT CHURCH IS NOT EXCUSED FROM THIS DUTY. (ACTS 5:11; ROM. 16:17; I COR.. 5:6-8, 13; II COR. 2:6; II THESS. 3:6, 14; TITUS 3:10, II JOHN 10).

(4) TO EDUCATE ITS CONSTITUENCY. (MATT. 28:18-20). JESUS GAVE THE GREAT COMMISSION, NOT ONLY THAT MEN SHOULD BE TAUGHT AND BAPTIZED, BUT ALSO THAT THEY SHOULD BE TAUGHT "TO OBSERVE ALL" THAT HE HAD COMMANDED THEM.

(5) TO EVANGELIZE THE WORLD.. (MATT. 28:19; LUKE 24:46 48; ACTS 1:8). THE GREAT COMMISSION DIRECTS THE CHURCH TO GO INTO ALL THE WORLD AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS.

(6) TO ACT AS A RESTRAINING AND ENLIGHTENING FORCE IN THE WORLD. (MATT. 5:13-16). JESUS SAID THAT BELIEVERS ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH AND THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. BY THEIR INFLUENCE AND LIFE-STYLE, THEY HOLD BACK THE DEVELOPMENT OF LAWLESSNESS.

(7) TO PROMOTE ALL THAT IS GOOD. (GAL. 6:10). WHILE THE BELIEVER IS TO SEPARATE FROM ALL WORLDLY ALLIANCES. (II COR. 6:14-18), HE IS YET TO SUPPORT ALL CAUSES THAT SEEK TO PROMOTE THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, AND EDUCATIONAL WELFARE OF THE COMMUNITY. ALL GOOD WORKS MUST BE DEFINITELY SUBORDINATED TO WORK OF EVANGELIZATION.

MAY CHRISTIANS EVERYWHERE RECOGNIZE THE TRUE MISSION OF THE CHURCH.

A MUCH NEEDED MINISTRY

Dwaine Powell

A famous football coach was on vacation with his family in Maine. When they walked into a movie theater and sat down, the handful of people there applauded. He thought to himself, "I can't believe it. People recognize me all the way up here." Then a man came over to him and said, "Thanks for coming. They won't start the movie for less than ten people."

Do you remember Mark Twain's famous comment? "I can live for two months on one good compliment." Doesn't that strike a responsive chord in all of us? Throughout scripture one fact of life is validated over and over again. Appreciation and encouragement from others are fundamental human needs. Listen to Paul's appreciation for an encouraging Philemon.

Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of saints. (Philemon 7)

Another great role model for encouragement was a Levite from Cyprus whose name was Joseph. He touched so many lives because of his generous and supportive spirit. One time he sold a field and gave the proceeds to the apostles to help relieve some of the financial burdens of other Christians.

On another occasion Joseph rallied around a new Christian by the name of Paul when others questioned his conversion. What an encouraging advocate Joseph became as he pleaded Paul's case before the apostles. Then there was the time a newly developed congregation in Antioch was in need of a strong, pastoral leadership. Joseph was the person to be sent. Guess

what he did when he arrived??

When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad" and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts. (Acts 11:24)

Like Philemon, Joseph was a "refresher of hearts." No wonder when the apostles thought of him they thought of one who knew how to encourage. As a matter of fact they didn't call him by the name he was born with. No, they gave him a new name that reflected his character. And how he lived up to the name, "Barnabas," a "son of encouragement."

And what reflects the heart of one of God's servants is what God desires to be reflected by all his people. Listen to the supportive admonition to the church in Hebrews:

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-and all the more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:24-25)

Appreciation and encouragement, a fundamental need? Don't you love it when you get that kind of attention? Don't you know others love it, when you show that kind of attention? Thank God for all those like Philemon and Barnabas who refresh and encourage.

How Suffering For Christ Makes Us Stronger

Dustin L. Wilder

Suffering for Christ makes us stronger by its refining fire. Those who Peter wrote were severely suffering, but Peter says that the genuine faith which they possessed was even more precious than pure gold. They could rejoice with "joy inexpressible" in their faithful endurance of grievous trials for the unseen Savior (1 Pet. 1:7-8). This faith has been purified by the fiery trials which test the godly life, for the impurities have risen up and been skimmed away.

Suffering for Christ makes us stronger by its resplendent and reserved reward. Like running a painful race to receive a reward, the life of the Christian sufferer is running for the reward. His hope (1 Peter 1:3) is a healthy trust in that genuine faith being found in honor, glory, and praise to God at the second coming of Christ, wherein he will receive that

reward; which is the imperishable, unstained, never-fading inheritance in heaven reserved for the faithful (1 Peter 1:4). To overcome the world of sin and unjust, scathing suffering, would truly make the reward of coming over to live with God the most enthralling experience ever! To receive the crown of life/righteousness from our Lord to live forever and ever motivates us to muscle our way joyfully through this earthly life of suffering. Our strength is instilled by the reward we work for and endure for.

Suffering for Christ makes us stronger by showing us the submissive life that the Savior had and which His saints are to have. Jesus was the perfect example of suffering. He was a sinless sufferer. Yet, He committed

continued on page 4

How Suffering For Christ Makes Us Stronger, *continued from page 3*

ted His soul to the one who judges righteously submitting His life to God in order to glorify Him and save sinful man. Jesus glorified God through a life of suffering! Saints can too, if they will submit to one another (1 Peter 3:8-12), to the civil government (1 Peter 2:13-17), to their husbands and wives (1 Peter 3:1-7), all in order to form a stronghold in suffering.

God promises that when suffering for Christ, one is standing in the true grace of God (1 Peter 5: 12). He promises that after suffering for a while joyously, the "God of all grace" will "perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you"(1 Peter 5:10).

Choosing a Leader

by Danny Tunnell

In America, many citizens exercise their right to vote. Many times, the candidates available for selection are not Christians. And yet, there are certain character traits voters should be looking for in selecting a mayor, council member, congress person, governor or president.

First, the person must be a righteous individual. "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn" (Proverbs 29:2).

Is the person righteous in character? Ability in a candidate is always desirable, but character in leadership is indispensable. "It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness: for the throne IS established by righteousness" (Proverbs 16:12).

Secondly, a leader must be a person of honesty. "Excellent speech becometh not a fool much less lying lips a prince" (Proverbs 17:7). "Mercy and truth persevere the king" (Proverbs 20:28)," all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death " (Rev. 21:8).

Thirdly, a leader must be a person who chooses wise

companions or helpers. "Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness" (Proverbs 25:5).

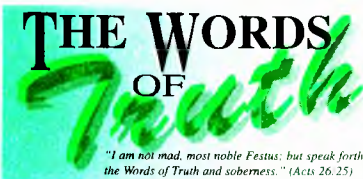
Fourthly,, a leader must be a person of sexual morality. "The words of king Lemuel,, the prophecy that his mother taught him. What, my son? And what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows? Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings" (Proverbs 31:1-3). Almighty God said: "Thou shalt not commits adultery (Exodus 20; 14).

Fifthly a leader must be a person who protects the weak and the helpless. The mother of king Lemuel said this to him, "Open thy mouth for the dumb ... open thy mouth, Judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy" (Proverbs 3 1:8,9).

If America chooses leaders who manifest all of these traits, then she has made God's choice, her choice. She will never hear God's rebuke. "They have set up kings? but not by Me" (Hosea 8:4). "And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen; and the Lord will not hear you in that day" (1 Sam. 8:18)..

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)*

Vol. 35 No. 28

July 9, 1998

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

**DESTROY THE SEED OF EVIL
MAN'S OBLIGATION TO GOD
TONGUE CONTROL
"IT IS THE WORLD IN
WHICH WE LIVE"**

DESTROY THE SEED OF EVIL

David ~ Wade

Aesop relates the story of the farmer sowing hemp seed in a field where a swallow and some other birds were hopping about picking up their food "Beware of that man!" said the swallow. "Why, what is he doing?" asked the other birds. That is hemp seed he is sowing. Be careful to pick up every one of the seeds, or you will regret it. said the swallow. The birds paid no attention to the swallow's admonition.

By and by, the hemp grew up and was made into cord and the cords into nets. Many of the birds who had despised the swallow's advice were caught in nets made out of that very hemp.

The moral of the story is, "Destroy the seed of evil, or it will grow up to your ruin."

How well this fable illustrates the teaching of Paul, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to the flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (Galatians 6:7-8).

Balaam said, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my end be like his!" (Numbers 23:10).

Balaam could not die the death of the righteous because he had lived the life of the wicked (Numbers 31:8, 16). Peter describes Balaam as one "who loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Peter 2:15). Truly, Balaam reaped what he sowed. It has been said, "Sow a thought, reap an act Sow an act reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny."

Jesus said to the rich man who lifted up his eyes in torment, "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise, Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented" (Luke 16:25).

All need to learn the lesson by admonition and not by experience that God will render to each one according to his deeds" (Romans 2:6). Paul states the choice clearly, "For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live" (Romans 8:13).

Each day we are sowing seed. We are either sowing the "seed of of the kingdom" or the "seed of evil.. Which is it?"

MAN'S OBLIGATION TO GOD

- 1. FEAR GOD -**
(Ecc. 12:13; Heb.12:28)
- 2. OBEY GOD -**
(I Sam. 15:22, Matt. 7:21)
- 3. LOVE GOD -**
(Matt. 22:37-38; 1 Jn. 4:19)
- 4. WORSHIP GOD -**
(Matt. 4:10; Jn. 4:23-24)
- 5. SERVE GOD -**
(Matt. 4:10; 6:24)
- 6. BE A FAITHFUL SERVANT -**
(1 Cor. 4:2)

FROM THE EDITORS

Levi Sides

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TONGUE CONTROL

On a windswept hill in an English churchyard stands a drab, gray slate tombstone. This stone bears an epitaph not easily seen unless one stoops and looks closely. The faint etching reads:

Beneath this stone, a lump of clay,
Lies Arabella Young,
Who, on the twenty-fourth of May,
Began to hold her tongue.

To the physician the tongue is a two-ounce slab of mucous membrane enclosing complex array of muscles and nerves that enables one to chew, taste, and swallow. How helpful!

The tongue is the major organ of communication that enables one to articulate distinct sounds so others can understand. How essential!

Without the tongue, no mother could sing her baby to sleep tonight; no attorney could defend the truth in court; no minister could preach the Gospel; no teacher could stretch the minds of students; and no military officer could lead his men in battle. Seldom do people pause to realize just how valuable this little muscle really is.

But the tongue is as volatile as it is vital. James wrote:

"And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity:
So is the tongue among our members,
That it defileth the whole body,
And setteth on fire the course of nature;
And it is set on fire of hell.
For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents,
And of things in the sea, is tamed,
And hath been tamed of mankind:
But the tongue can no man tame;
It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. (James 3:6-8)

James tells the three powers of the tongue: the power to direct, the power to destroy and the power to delight (James 3:1-12). James gives two illustrations with each of these three powers of the tongue. With the power to direct, he uses the illustrations of the bits in the horses' mouths and the rudder on the ships (James 3:3-4); with the power to destroy, he uses the illustrations of fire and the animals (James 3:5-8); and, with the power to delight, he uses the illustrations of the fountain" the fruit trees (James 3:9-12).

The tongue can ignite flames, which quickly spreads,, wrecking reputations, destroying friendships, breaking hearts, and rendering worthless a man's religion! On the other hand, the tongue can speak many wonder-working words as "I am sorry"; "I was wrong, will you forgive me-; "I love you.; and, "You are an inspiration to me."

God has always been concerned about the use of the tongue. Two of the Ten Commandments refer to the sins of the tongue: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord your God in vain . ." and "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" (Exodus 20:7,16).

"These six things doth the Lord hate; yea, seven are an abomination unto him." Three of these have to do with the tongue: a lying tongue, a false witness, and he that soweth discord among brethren (Proverbs 6:16-19).

Jesus warns: ". . . that every idle word that men shall speak,, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. . . and by thy words thou shalt be condemned (Matthew 12: 36-37). The half brother of Jesus wrote: "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain" . (James 1:26). "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath" (James 1:19). Solomon wrote: "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise" (Proverbs 10:19). "He that hath knowledge spareth his words . . ." (Proverbs 17:27). "Death and life are in the power of the tongue . . (Proverbs 18:21). ". . . a fool's voice is known by multitude of words." (Ecclesiastes 5:3). David's prayer included: " Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer . . . Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" (Psalm 19:14; 141:3) "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." (Proverbs 25:11).

If you are tempted to reveal
A tale to you someone has told
About another, make it pass,
Before you speak, three gates of gold.
These narrow gates: First, "Is it true?"
Then, "Is it needful?" In your mind,
Give truthful answer. And the next
Is last and narrowest, "Is it kind?"
And if to reach your lips at last
It passes through these gateways three,
Then you may tell the tale, not fear
What the result of speech may be.

Speech is a marvelous gift from God. Properly used, it brings Him honor and glory; improperly used, it profanes His great name. A controlled tongue helps ensure abundant life (I Peter 3:10); and, an uncontrolled tongue brings promise of everlasting torment. In the day of judgment we will face the record of our word (Matthew 12:36-37). Arabella Young began tongue control too late!

“IT IS THE WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE”

Jason R. Roberts

Paul Harvey tells us that in Maryland a young lady has to get parental consent to get her ears pierced, but the same young lady can have an abortion without mom and dad knowing about it. That is the world in which we live. In Pennsylvania, a young lady was sent home from school because of the T-shirt she was wearing. The front of the T-shirt said, "I AM A VIRGIN." Tragically, the back of the shirt read "THIS IS AN OLD SHIRT." That is the world in which we live. Thousands of schools all across our nation have taken down the Ten Commandments and have put up metal detectors as their replacement, and that too is the world in which we live. The world in which we live is a world that calls homosexuality a respectable lifestyle, while God calls it a repulsive lifestyle (Rom. 1:24-28, Jude 7). Things that were once considered an abomination are now deemed as "selected alternatives." Morality is now determined by the majority, yet Jesus said the majority will be lost (Matt. 7:13,14, 21-23).

Years ago grass was something you mowed, today it is something you smoke. Coke was something you drank, today it is something you snort. Pot was something you cooked in, today it is something that is cooked and smoked. Rock and Roll music was a Grandma's lullaby, today's Rock music would "rock" Grandmother out of her chair and "roll" her into her grave. There was a time when aids were student helpers in the Principal's office, today AIDS is a raging plague. This is the world in which we live.

It is a world in which the sanctity of human life is cheapened to the expression of "It's my choice", when years ago it was expressed as "It's my child!" It is a world that used to take care of the aged and the infirmed (James 1:27), but now under the tide of "mercy killing" we relieve their pain by giving them an injection, and many, if not most of them slip out into eternity where they have even greater pain! Ladies and gentleman how long, oh how long, will such injustice and rebellion persist in a land that

claims Jehovah as their God. The truth of the matter is they know not God! Like the people of Hosea's day, our nation is "*destroyed for lack of knowledge*" (Hosea 4:6). "*Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Isreal: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land mourn . . .*" (Hosea 4:1-3a). The word "*controversy*" literally means a lawsuit. Jehovah had a "lawsuit" against the nation of Israel. Has he taken one out on America?

We brag about our nation's military defense and how powerful we are against the nations about US. But friends are you aware that at the hand of an Almighty God the smallest nation in the world could destroy us? The nation of Israel came crashing down because of their sins. Will America go down in History as a nation that forgot God and was laid to waste because of their wickedness? (Psalm 9:17). The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, because of their wickedness, were turned into a modern day ghosttown within hours, what about America? It is the inward corruption of a nation that is more harmful than its external enemies. "*Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he*" (Prov. 29:18). "*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people*" (Prov. 14:34). Keeping the Law is an INWARD characteristic of one's love for the Lord (John 14:15; 1 John 2:3-5) Righteousness is an INWARD characteristic of one's holiness before the Lord (1 Pet. 1:15-16, 1 John 3:7).

If we want to turn our nation around, we are going to have to start focusing (vision) our attention on internals (righteousness) rather than just externals. We must get into the hearts and lives of people and give them the "*engrafted word, which is able to saw our souls*" (James 1:21). The gospel is able and powerful enough to slice a man's heart wide open (Rom. 1:16; Heb. 4:12) The question is, are we taking the "*sword of the Spirit*" (Eph. 6:17) and giving it to

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them? The late brother Andrew Connally used to say, "let's take the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, and remember that God didn't give us a butter paddle to play with, and let's take the shield of faith, and remember that God doesn't want us to turn it upside down and build a flower planter out of it, and let's go to work for the Lord."

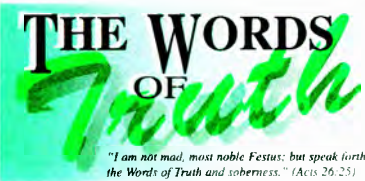
The world in which we live is a world fraught with confusion, yet it still has many righteous individuals, who are pursuing those things that are *true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report*" (Philip. 4:8) Remaining neutral, rather than voicing a concern, places one with the guilty (cf. Obadiah 11). We must get involved and come out of the dark and "let our lights shine"(Matt. 5:16) in a world of darkness, in a world destined for failure, in a world doomed for destruction.

Many Americans have manifested the same attitude toward the word of God that the Romans did that Paul referred to in his letter to the church at Rome. Read carefully verses eighteen and following of the first chapter and notice that they **FIRST** left God doctrinally and then morally. They refused to **HONOR** God

(v.21a), they refused to **ACKNOWLEDGE** God (v. 1921a), they refused to **THANK** God (v.21) and they **EXCHANGED** the truth of God for lie (v.25) Observe the first letter of each of the above bold words, "Honor," Acknowledge," "Thank," "Exchanged." It spells out very clearly their attitude toward the Lord, **HATE!** (v.30a) What was the result of their hatred toward God? *Foolishness ((v.22),), idolatry (v. 23,25), homosexuality (v. 24, 26-28), unrighteousness,, fornicators, wickedness, covetousness,maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural of affection, implacable, unmerciful"* (v. 29-31). That was the world in which they lived, and ironically, it is the same world in which we are living in today.

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)*

Vol. 35 No. 29

July 16, 1998

**SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:
"BUT WE SEE JESUS"
THE GLUE THAT HOLDS A
MARRIAGE TOGETHER
Mom and dad, please slow down!
PUT ON THE BRAKES!
LESS TALK...MORE ACTION**

"BUT WE SEE JESUS"

Johnny Ramsey

The Hebrew letter begins with the glory of Christ and closes magnifying "that great Shepherd of the sheep". In between 1:1 and 13:20 we are exhorted to keep our eyes on Him (12:2) who is "higher than the heavens" (7:26). The epistle to the Hebrews was primarily an exhortation to faithfulness. Jewish Christians were leaving the gospel system and reverting to former allegiance toward the law given in Sinai. The inspired penman of Hebrews eloquently argues for the better things of Christianity. The heart and core of this powerful treatise is the beauty of Jesus, the only perfect One to live upon the earth from Creation to Judgment Day!

In Hebrews 2:9 we have one of the most definitive verses in all of sacred text regarding the way of redemption. Christians, then and now, are told to behold the Lord. By the grace of God, Christ tasted of death for everyone of us. What loyalty we therefore owe to Him: How foolish to even contemplate leaving the Savior! Rather, such consideration of the Redeemer's matchless love should naturally draw us nearer to Him!

"Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, sweetest name I know
Fills my every longing
Keeps me singing as I go."

One ancient writer spoke these powerful words:

"Were the highest heavens my pulpit
The innumerable angels my audience
And eternity my time
Jesus Christ would always be my text."

On the Mount of Transfiguration we read these graphic words in Matthew 17:8...

"They turned and saw only Jesus."

After all, Christ is the only way to the Father (John 14:6) and the only name wherein salvation is found (Acts 4:12). It is significant that the Hebrew writer did not tell the recipients of this epistle to behold Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah or John the Immerser. Jehovah gave Christ Jesus the name that is above every other name (Phil. 2:9) and the one name whereby we glorify God (I Peter 4:16; James 2:7). F. Whitfield wrote a song magnifying the sweet name of Jesus:

"There is a name I love to hear,
I love to sing its worth:
It sounds like music in mine ear,
The sweetest name on earth."

In the opening stanza of the grandest life ever spent upon earth we learn that the name of the Master means salvation (Matthew 1:21). He truly came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). Paul wrote cogently of our desperate need and heaven's gracious gift in I Timothy 1:15 and II Corinthians 9:15:

"Christ Jesus came into the world to save
sinners...thanks be unto God for His
unspeakable gift."

Many prophecies of the Old Testament foretold the coming of the One who had always been (Micah 5:1-3). Yes, the very One on whom Jehovah would place the iniquities of us all (Isaiah 53). The last book of the Old Testament promised that one in the spirit and power of Elijah would prepare the way for the Messiah and then suddenly the Lord would come (Malachi 3; Isaiah 40). In Luke 1:17 we learn that John the Baptist was the very man likened unto Elijah. His clarion call upon seeing Jesus Christ

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FROM THE EDITORS

Glenn Posey

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THE GLUE THAT HOLDS A MARRIAGE TOGETHER

God said, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). The word "cleave" in this passage has an interesting meaning. It means: to join oneself to, join, cling to. If you trace its history, you will find that the word "cleave" goes back to the word meaning "glue". Thus the word would signify "to glue together, cement, fasten together".

When building a house, what can hold bricks together? Is it not the mortar mix (glue)? If it were not for the cement the brick would not be able to stay in place, to say nothing about the onslaught of bad weather. My brother was a brick mason, and he taught me the importance of mixing the mortar (mud) correctly. If the mud wasn't mixed correctly, then the brick would fall apart.

The union of a man and woman in the bonds of holy wedlock is the strongest of all human bonds. It is stronger than the parent/child bond. Marriage is of such a nature, it is a symbol of the union between Christ and His church (Ephesians 5). When two people (man and woman) get married they are like two rippling rivers coming together, and becoming submerged in each other to flow on to a never ending eternity, each growing fonder and fonder of each other with the passing of years. For that to happen, there must be the right ingredients to cement that marriage. Otherwise time will bring the storms that will chip away until that marriage will go on the rocks.

What is the "glue" that holds two peo-

ple together, each growing fonder and fonder of the other as the years pass? Is it not "true love"? When people get married for any other reason than that they love each other, then that marriage is doomed before it begins. If there is some sexual or selfish reason for marrying, this is a far cry from the reason that God had in mind in Genesis 2:24.

It is God's will that a man and woman contract in marriage simply because they are deeply in love with each other (Ephesians 5). In such cases they are always looking out for the welfare of the other, and thoughtful of the needs of each other. In self-sacrifice each seeks to meet the needs of the other.

The "glue" of love that holds two people together manifests itself in kindness, forgiveness, tenderheartedness, compassion, consideration, thoughtfulness, etc. The same thing that will win a mate will also keep one. The key to a successful marriage is found in Ephesians chapter five.

How is your marriage? Don't let the "glue" of your marriage disappear or weaken. Just remember, love is the bond that holds you and your mate together for a lifetime. It's not too late - love and care for each other tenderly, be considerate, and kind. All that has been said in this article is summed up in what Jesus said in one verse of scripture: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Matthew 7:12). This is called "The Golden Rule". It is the greatest rule or principle known to man. It has its finest hour in the home.

“BUT WE SEE JESUS”, *continued from Page 1*

contained marvelous words:

“Behold, the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world.”

In Leviticus 16 the scape goat in a metaphor carried the sins of the people on the Day of Atonement into the wilderness but our blessed Lord actually “gave Himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil world” (Gal. 1:4). When we compare John 1:1, 1:14 and 17:5 we can see the pre-earthly existence of our Savior set forth. Yes, in the beginning, the Word was with God and was God. That Word became flesh and tabernacled upon men. John 1:14 goes on to declare:

“And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

In John 17:5 our Lord prayed unto Jehovah:

“And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory I had with thee before the world was.”

In Philippians, chapter two, we find the perfect commentary on our passage in Hebrews 2:9 and the verses just cited in the gospel account by John. The willingness Christ manifested to subjugate His roll to the ultimate redemptive plan of the Godhead and be made “a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death” is certainly cause for us to behold Christ, who by the grace of God, tasted of death for every man.

“There was One who was willing
To die in my stead
That a soul so unworthy might live.”

We thrill to the marvelous reminder in I Peter 2:24:

“He bore our sins in his own
body upon the tree.”

In the epistle to the Hebrews we also behold the Man of Galilee in contrast to others. His supremacy over angels is set forth in chapter one. In the second stanza of the book Christ is superior as the captain of our salvation. He is greater than Moses according to Hebrews 3:1-6. The promise of rest attending Christianity (4:9; Rev. 14:13) supersedes anything Joshua could provide in Canaan. The priesthood of the Levitical arrangements faded into oblivion when compared with the one High Priest of the Gospel Age, Christ Jesus our Lord. In fact Hebrews 7:26 and 10:12 forever form a tandem of thought that caused Judaism to fade away. Those verses tell us that the Savior is “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens” and that “once in the end of the world He put away sin by the death of himself”. In other words, our majestic Lord is both High Priest and sacrifice at the same time. Is it any wonder that we are told to constantly “look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2)! Holland Boring wrote these beautiful sentiments in a gospel song:

“Twas Christ, my Lord who came to share
My greatest joy, my deepest care;
I cast on Him my every fear,
Content to know that He is near.”

Mom and dad, please slow down! PUT ON THE BRAKES!

David Sain

Now, I know you are busy, and you never seem to get caught up, Every day brings a long list of urgent matters demanding your attention. There is simply not enough time to do all that you want to do and need to do.

But, I beg you, recognize that you will always have to leave something undone, and take time for your child every day.

If necessary, schedule time for your child. Reserve some time every day to have some fun with your

child -- to do what your child wants to do.
Take time every day -- to play, to talk, to listen.

That child will never be this size and this age again.
So, make the most of every moment.

“*And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord* (Ephesians 6:4). *Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it*” (Proverbs 22:6).

LESS TALK...MORE ACTION

Neal Pollard

Someone has quipped, "When all is said and done, a lot more gets said than done." Four times in the New Testament, the phrase "well done" appears (Matt. 25:21,23; Acts 10:33; Phil. 4:14). On the other hand, the phrase "well said" appears a massive total of zero times! A Christian's speech is to be sound (Tit. 2:8; Col. 4:5-6) and "a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Prov. 25:11), but there comes a time when "talk is cheap"!

There have been churches who lurched head first into actions without proper planning. Disciplining the disorderly, financing buildings, supporting missionaries, and the like require great deliberation. However, how many more times have brethren deliberated so long that important, necessary functions and works were too long delayed? Yes, the church can talk too long and wind up doing too little. Planning meetings of whatever sort can often take up many hours as items are discussed, but too often too little comes of all the talk! Programs of involvement, which will result in helping new, isolated, or newly identified Christians feel more a part of the work, should not be but often are delayed until it may become too late.

Certain statistics reveal that a habit is formed in six months. If a Christian gets used to not being involved in leading in some phase of worship (the

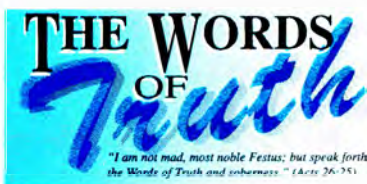
Christian men), visitation, Bible classes, or some other area of involvement, those six months or more may be hard to counteract! An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. Far better to urgently develop "programs" of work and search out ways for how all Christians can find a sense of belonging in the local church.

To simply do much talking then do little or no acting will frustrate the membership, discourage weak and new Christians, overburden the already active (by putting too much work on few backs), and limit the amount of good the church can do. Planning is important, but empty talk is not far removed from idle and vain chatter (cf. Matt. 12:36-37; Tit. 1:10). As no one is guaranteed tomorrow (Jas. 4:13-14), the church must see the urgency in carrying out those good works for which it must give account to God (Jn. 4:35).

Too much talking can be like a wheel -- the longer the spoke, the greater the tire! Let there be thoughtful, careful discussion about what needs to be done, but then let there be urgent, active Christians "working the plan". Plato said, "Wise men talk because they have something to say; fools, because they have to say something." May God's people be wise. Both the arms and the legs are bigger and stronger than the tongue. Perhaps that's because God wanted man to use the former that much more than the latter.

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

Vol. 35 No. 30

July 23, 1998

HUMBLE YOURSELVES

Vance Hutton

God calls for his people to be humble. Our perfect example was humble. Paul in Phil 2:5-8 wrote of the Lord humbling himself, even to the death of the cross. Jesus spoke of himself in Matt. 11:29 and affirmed that he was meek and lowly in heart. We are to follow our Lord in this trait (Phil. 2:5; I Jn. 2:6). Micah spoke of the required humility (Micah 6:6-8). Many verses in the New Testament call for us to be of an humble heart and disposition. Phil. 2:3 speaks of the lowliness of mind that should characterize us all. James 4:10 speaks of humbling ourselves in the sight of the Lord with the faithful promise that the Lord will lift us up. I Peter 5:5 teaches us that God resists the proud and giveth grace to the humble and calls upon us to clothe ourselves with humility. The humble will be exalted in due time (I Pet. 5:6). Humility is a part of the new man that is to be put on after becoming a Christian (Col. 3:12-13). Ephesians 4:2 calls upon children of God to walk with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love. Are we gentle, courteous, meek, and lowly in heart and mind? Let us notice three things which either prevent or destroy humility in our lives. With a realization of the importance of humility, these things ought to be avoided as if they were carriers of a deadly plague. These are feeling of self-righteousness, self-sufficiency and self-satisfaction.

I) FEELINGS OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS: Jesus spoke a parable unto certain

that trusted in themselves that they were righteous (Lk. 18:9). Feelings of self-righteousness prevented or destroyed any humility that this Pharisee might have had. How sad it is to have an arrogant attitude toward sin. A man that views himself as righteous in and of himself and without the Lord is greatly to be pitied. Let us never forget that we are righteous only through the Lord (I Cor. 1:30; II Cor. 5:21).

II) FEELINGS OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY: A person cannot be humble who fails to see that God is the giver and the one who has blessed him with all he has or will have. God gives to all life, breath, and all things (Acts 17:25). In Him we live, move, and have our being (Acts 17:28). The rich farmer of Luke 12 is one who feels self-sufficient. He senses no need of God and feels no debt to God. It is not possible for one of such feelings to be humble.

III) FEELINGS OF SELF-SATISFACTION: Paul is an example of one ever so humble. He viewed himself as chief of sinners, less than the least of all saints, and the least of the apostles. He was truly a man of humility. Paul was not self-satisfied. Phil. 3:12-14 shows that Paul forgot past accomplishments and ever pressed forward toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us ever realize that we can know more, be more, and do more for the Lord.

These things prevent or destroy humility. Humble we must be to enter and be great in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:3-4).

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:
HUMBLE YOURSELVES
WHEN IS A PERSON EDUCATED?
SAVING FAITH
WHAT IS GOD LIKE?
ARE "MONDAYS" KILLING US?

FROM THE EDITORS

Glenn Posey

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WHEN IS A PERSON EDUCATED?

With all the emphasis that is placed on education these days, one is made to wonder why the world is not a better place in which to live. Surely, with all the advances made in every field of endeavor, man must have an advantage over his ancestors. But alas, it is obvious that our world is growing more and more wicked; murder, rape, theft, lying, abortion, drunkenness, and the such like are raging. Has man, with all his schooling, not learned that way of life is wrong, even from the standpoint of human wisdom? So, what our world has is educated murderers, fornicators, thieves, etc. The real question still remains, when is a person educated? This is the question we shall address in this article.

1. When he knows the Bible. Jesus said, "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Peter and John were accused of being, "unlearned and ignorant men" (Acts 4:13). The truth was, these two men were better educated than all the council. Without a knowledge of God's word leaves one in darkness.
2. When he knows about God. Job said, "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee" (Job 22:21). Search the scriptures, meditate upon them day and night (Psalms 1:1,2). God is the God of the Bible. He revealed Himself to His creation through revelation (the Bible). The psalmist said, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God" (Psalms 14:1). One might know all there is know otherwise, but if he doesn't know about God, he is not truly educated.
3. When he knows about God's Son, Jesus Christ, God said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matthew 17:5). Christ is man's only hope. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Paul said, "I know whom I have believed" (Phil. 3:13).
4. When he knows how to live. Knowing how to make a living is one thing, but knowing how to live is another. Ephraim was a cake half baked (turned) (Hosea 7:8). In other words, he was only cooked on one side. Knowing what is right and wrong is real education. God's will, the Bible, instructs man how to live. Until you know how to live in order to be acceptable unto God, you are not educated. You might know how to do a thing or two, but if you don't know how to live your life is for naught.
5. When he knows how to pray. "...one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1). Every Christian needs to know how to pray. John declared, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us" (1 John 5:14). Thus, God teaches us how to pray in His will, the Bible.
6. When he knows how to worship God in spirit and truth. Jesus said, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24). When true worship takes place, it is according to truth.

The list could go on. But these are sufficient to show when a person is truly educated. The question then is, are you educated?

SAVING FAITH

Sam Willcut

Early this morning he came again into the temple, Jesus said to the Jews. *"I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins"* (John 8:24). Notice the impact of this statement.

Jesus said, *"...For it ye believe not..."* Faith is necessary to becoming a child of God. As the saying goes--if someone does not believe in something, he will most likely fall for anything. Faith is defined in Hebrews 11:1: *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* Faith is attained through the hearing of God's word (Romans 10:17). It is the victory which is able to overcome the world (I John 5:4). It is able to defend us from Satan (Ephesians 6:16). Most any religious person understands faith is essential in pleasing God (Hebrews 11:6).

Not any faith will do. Jesus said, *"...For if ye believe not that I am he..."* Jesus was naturally referring to himself as the Son of God. The word *he* in the text is in italics, meaning the translators added it for understanding. The very next verse shows the Jews did not understand what he was referring to. As Jesus pointed out, some would not be able to understand because of their preconceived notions, while *"many believed on him"* (John 8:30). Believing Jesus was a good man is not the necessary faith God requires. Believing Jesus was a prophet even was not enough. The faith necessary to do God's will is

faith that believes Jesus is the Christ. This is why the Jews already agreed if any should confess Jesus to be the Christ, that person would be thrown out of the synagogue (John 9:22).

What were the consequences? If one did not believe Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God, *"...ye shall die..."* The penalty was death. Is not this a bit harsh? Was he not speaking already to morally good people? How can Jesus condemn morally good people? They were not extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or cheaters (Luke 18:10). And to take it further, he was speaking at the time to what we would consider Orthodox Jews. These were the most devout Jews. Most of them fasted more than was required and tithed more than was required (Luke 18:11). How can God condemn such religiously devout people to death? God said so. Those who do not believe Jesus to be the Christ would die.

Nevertheless, this was not just any death. This was spiritual death. Jesus said, *"...ye shall die in your sins."* This death is much more worse than physical death (Matthew 10:28). Many scriptures can be given to show we all sin (Romans 3:10,23; I John 1:8-19; Isaiah 53:6; Ecclesiastes 7:20; I Kings 8:46). The only way for us not to die in our sins is to believe Jesus is the one who died for our sins. Then by allowing Christ's blood to cleanse us from those sins in baptism, our obedient faith will save us (Mark 16:16; Romans 5:1).

WHAT IS GOD LIKE?

Johnny Ramsey

The attributes of God are varied, interesting and sublime. Many people do not know what the Bible reveals concerning Deity. As a result millions go through life totally devoid of a proper understanding of their Maker. In Exodus 20 we learn that God is jealous and does not want us to serve other gods. Our affection and worship must not be compromised. We dare not try to follow two masters at the same time (Matthew 6:24). Our heavenly Father is holy and demands our purity of devotion as well (1 Peter 1:16). He is also the essence of love (1 John 4:8) and desires that we genuinely reciprocate in a loyalty that never dies (John 14:15).

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah
Pilgrim through this barren land
I am weak but Thou art mighty
Hold me with Thou powerful hand...

Our God is eternal - from everlasting to everlasting (Psalms 90:1-2). His sovereign majesty rules in all the earth (Daniel 4:25). He is the quintessence of truth (Romans 3:4) and only we who abide therein can be free (John 8:31-32). The immutable Creator is just and a keeper of His word (Hebrews 6:18). Verily, the Judge of

all the earth will do what is right (Genesis 18:25). There is no way we can successfully war against Him nor should we try. Such efforts will be futile and vain. In Psalms 50:21 we learn that Jehovah is not like us and we err when we try to make God in our image! Paul made it clear to the Athenian philosophers that Jehovah was near to everyone of us and is indeed the source of life, hope and blessings (Acts 17). Paul's spirit stirred within him when he observed the crass devotion to pagan gods. Jonah, the reluctant prophet had a warped view of Deity. He complained that God was too kind, merciful and forgiving. It grieved that shallow patriot that an enemy in the political arena (Nineveh) actually had hope if they repented and turned to the Lord! So many, like Jonah, try to invent a phantom that does not exist and then call their creation: God.

Today, we even have brethren who attempt to change what the Creator clearly sets forth in the Scriptures concerning the way a sinner is saved, the standards for marriage and divorce, the simplicity of scriptural worship and the proper roles for men and women in the home, society and assembly worship. Have we forgotten that He means what the Bible says and that must not be changed (Hebrews 13:8)?

ARE "MONDAYS" KILLING US?

You have heard it stated in various ways: "It's a typical Monday" or "I'm having a pretty good day...for a Monday," or just simply, "It's Monday!" What does it mean? It suggests that Monday can become a no-good, low-down terrible day, complete with headaches, machine breakdown, and problems. But it can also mean something else.

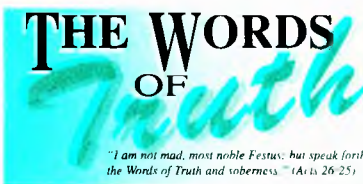
While visiting the hospital, a preacher ran into a college chum of his. As this pal (now businessman) learned that his friend was still preaching, he urged him to do more preaching on behavior, conduct, and Christian living. The reason--his assessment was that "Mondays are killing us!"

How easy it is to sit and hear the sermons of the day before and yet not take them to heart. How painless is it to be viewed as a Christian light on Sunday, and yet refuse to shine on Monday in the business world of dog-eat-dog. How easy it is to react to those who jerk on our chain, giving them a piece of our mind; when that mind is not spiritually secure, or singularly approved by God!

Jesus said that our Christ-like lifestyle must be continual: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke 9:23). We must be the salt of the earth and the light of the world always, not on certain days of the week.

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How do we do it? How do we maintain our religious discipline, even on bad days?

1) LIVE ONE DAY AT A TIME. (Matthew 6:34)
Block the day out into increments of time. Try to act as Christ would in every moment through-out the day.

2) ACT, DON'T REACT. "See that none render evil for evil unto any man, but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. (I Thessalonians 5:15) Do not allow obnoxious people to pull us down to their level. Treat them as you would desire to be treated. (Matthew 7:12)

3) PRAY REGULARLY (I Thessalonians 5:17)
A plaque on my desk reads, "God help me to remember that nothing is going to happen to me that You and I together can't handle."

4) REFLECT Re-think the sermons preached last Sunday, listening for that which can be of great value in the battles we must face.

5) GLORIFY CHRIST (Matthew 5:16) May we live and conduct ourselves in such a way, so that Christ and his Church may be uplifted and exalted. Let's not allow any day to kill us!

THE WORDS OF *Truth*

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:
BLAME IT ON EL NINO
GOD'S DRESS CODE
I LIKE TEENAGERS
EVERY MEMBER A SOUL WINNER
FAILURE NEED NOT BE FINAL
THE LORD IS AT HAND

Vol. 35 No. 31

July 30, 1998

BLAME IT ON EL NINO

Daniel Ridinger

You have heard of *El Nino*? If you haven't, then maybe you have been like an ostrich with your head in the sand. One major news provider has a nightly *El Nino Watch*.

El Nino is Spanish for the "boy child", a reference to describe the onset of a warm ocean current off the South American coast in late December. The modern usage of *El Nino* refers to a sequence of changes in the ocean and atmospheric circulation across the Pacific Ocean.

Environmentalists who believe in global warming point to *El Nino* as evidence. Yet, records of *El Nino* go back at least one hundred fifty years. The flooding in California, the recent freeze in Georgia peach country, and the dry tropical forests of South America are attributed to *El Nino's* wrath. *El Nino* receives the blame for a lot of havoc.

Similarly, blame is placed on other people and things for personal misfortune and wrongdoing in life. It might be that we simply made an unwise decision, which financially cost us more than we bargained for, OR perhaps we knowingly did something wrong, such as steal from an employer, resulting in termination. In both cases, we cannot justifiably blame anyone, except ourselves.

Placing the blame elsewhere is a common practice because

it can be difficult to come to terms with personal sin. David wrestled with a guilty conscience due to his adulterous affair with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah the Hittite. David said, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer" (Psalm 32:3-4). David was miserable in his impenitent condition. David did not find it easy to come to grips with his iniquity. Eventually, David squarely faced his sins and confessed them to God. "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psalm 32:5).

In our nation some people do not like to accept responsibility for personal wrongdoing. They had much rather blame other people, sickness, ignorance, mechanical failure, mental illness, corporations, heredity, society, drugs, so on. Blame is the name of the game! But blaming others and things for personal sin will not cleanse a guilty conscience and bring joy. It is only when we accept personal responsibility for our sins and humbly obey God's will that we can experience forgiveness and the joy of salvation.

GOD'S DRESS CODE

David R. Pharr

A sign in front of a church building invited, "Come As You Are, God Has No Dress Code." No doubt the intended meaning was that casual attire would be welcomed at their services, but is it really true that "God has no dress code"?

James made it clear that there must be no discrimination in our assemblies on the basis of whether one wears the fashionable clothing of the rich or the shabby raiment of the poor (James 2:1-4). "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). In the world it may sometimes be true that "Clothes make the man", but this should never be the viewpoint of spiritually minded people.

On the other hand, in some respects God does have a dress code. When I saw the sign, I wondered how that church would react when someone shows up in the near naked outfits seen in many public places. We are hearing of churches where shorts are thought to be acceptable attire. The Lord's dress code is "modest apparel" (1 Timothy 2:9).

There is also a dress code for the heart. "Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man (person) of the heart...For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves..." (1 Peter 3:3-4). The text speaks especially to women, but the principle of "adorning" the inner person applies to all. In Heaven's sight men and women are measured by character, not by clothing.

We are sometimes asked to define exactly what is modest clothing. It might be expected that specific measurements and styles should be listed. Frankly such efforts are never satisfactory. The key to deciding what is modest is within. In the text above Peter shows that one must get the heart right before selecting apparel for the body. One who has a heart adorned with purity, humility, honor, goodness and virtue will not choose clothing that is provocative, suggestive, ostentatious or lewd.

FROM THE EDITORS

Levi Sides

*Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
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I LIKE TEENAGERS

I like teenagers. I like the fresh way they look at life...their free and easy style. I like their confidence, their courage, and their optimism.

I like the way they walk...limber and free and friendly...young people with tomorrow in their eyes.

I like teenagers... they challenge barriers. They are unafraid to stick a pin into the old balloons of yesterday.

Their very youth makes them pioneers. They think over mountains. They are the future of the world with hope in their hearts. Bright faces...eager smiles, alert eyes, energy in motion.

They are doctors of tomorrow, the mothers, the fathers, the teachers, the generals, the bosses, the judges, the senators, the presidents.

They make things happen. Alexander Hamilton helped fan the flames of the American Revolution as a teenager. Mozart was a famous musician at 13...Napoleon was an officer in the French Army at 16.

Josiah reformed Israel as a teenager...Longfellow was a college professor when he was 19...Alexander the Great was a general of the army that conquered the world at 16...and Andrew Jackson fought against the British for American freedom when he was 14.

Teenagers are pre-occupied with their own personal crossing into maturity, as they must be. The second decade of life is a long, high bridge between childhood and adulthood. They enter the bridge of

adolescence as children. They leave the second decade of life as adults.

Teenagers are faced with a number of interrelated tasks of growing up. In brief, these developmental tasks are: 1. Coming to terms with a changing body; 2. Making new friends in new ways - with both sexes; 3. Stretching away from childish dependence upon parents; 4. Answering life's biggest questions: Who am I? What is life? What is the purpose of life?; and 5. Finding out what they can do and the training needed to do it.

"Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them" (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Teenagers, you have so much to give to the Lord. You have bright minds...zeal and enthusiasm and optimism...adjusting ability...and a desire to be given responsibilities in the Lord's work.

Let the Bible guide your every decision (II Timothy 2:15). "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the Land, and verily thou shalt be fed" (Psalm 37:3). Pray-we cannot guess our way to Heaven; we need His guidance and strength (I Thessalonians 5:16-17). Detour away from sin. "When in doubt - Don't!" Choose friends that will inspire you to do good. Remember friends are the reflection of you. Accept the hard knocks of life. Give your many talents to the Lord.

Teenagers, I like you!

EVERY MEMBER A SOUL WINNER

Wendell Winkler

The early church, the model church, was composed of members who, though driven from their homes, their cities, and their kin, "went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:1-4). Yet, here we sit - who can deny it - in our smugness, contentment, indifference, lukewarmness, complacency, and in our "come-and-get-it" attitude.

Though in the eyes of the world the wise man is the skilled diplomat, prudent philosopher, and astute economist, in the eyes of the Lord, "He that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30). "And they that be wise (teachers in the margin) shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and forever (Daniel 12:2)."

We need to be burdened with the lost as our Lord was (Luke 19:41). So burdened was He that He went down from the mountain, taught in their synagogues, cleansed the temple, and went to the cross for them. How great a sacrifice are we willing to make for the lost?

We need to sing fervently and pray sincerely, "LEAD ME TO SOME SOUL TODAY, OH, TEACH ME LORD JUST WHAT TO SAY, FRIENDS OF MINE ARE LOST IN SIN AND CANNOT FIND THEIR WAY, FEW

THERE ARE WHO SEEM TO CARE; FEW THERE ARE WHO PRAY, MELT MY HEART AND FILL MY LIFE, LEAD ME TO SOME SOUL TODAY." But you ask, "How can I win souls?"

1. Set up a cottage class and teach it yourself.
2. Set up a cottage class and, if you feel incapable, invite a qualified teacher to your home to do the instructing.
3. With an open Bible teach another the way of the Lord more perfectly.
4. Bring your lost friends and kinsman to the services.
5. Distribute tracts.
6. Subscribe to religious periodicals for your lost friends.

Our field is white (John 4:35). Our prospects are multiplied. Our opportunities are unlimited. Our potential is limitless. We must arise! Someone has written, "A church that does not extend a hand to meet opportunities and possibilities is on its way to the cemetery. The members who do nothing are its pallbearers. All who are busy with their own affairs and have not time for the church carry the wreath. The indifferent brother is driving the hearse. Those always holding the church back are throwing flowers on the grave."

FAILURE NEED NOT BE FINAL

The history books are filled with the biographies of failures who made good. From them we can learn the valuable lesson: that failure need not be fatal.

The first President of the United States--the father of our country--lost two-thirds of the battles he fought during the Revolutionary War. But George Washington won the war, founded a nation and succeeded brilliantly in spite of those failures.

Who failed more than Babe Ruth? In a baseball career that spanned 21 years, the immortal slugger hit 714 home runs but he struck out 1,330 times! Until he retired in 1935, this famous failure was baseball's biggest attraction.

A lot of people who have made the history books started out poorly but finished well. Just because one fails at some point does not mean he or she is a failure.

After Edison had experimented 10,000 times with his storage battery and still couldn't get it to work, a friend tried to comfort him. "Why I have not failed," Edison replied. "I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." Nearly deaf, with only three months of formal schooling, Thomas A. Edison patented more than 1,000 inventions. During his 60 years of reaching toward the unknown, Edison failed more than he succeeded. Who would call him a failure?

Is it a sin to fail? The answer is both yes and no. It is a sin when failure is due to moral or spiritual laxness or to laziness. But it isn't a sin to fail when one has done his or her best, within the will of God, and the results don't come out.

One must not be so afraid of life that one refuses to try. We don't have to succeed, but we do have to give life a run for its money.

A faithful old preacher felt he had failed miserably when he reported that only one new member--and just a boy at that--had been saved and added to the church during the year. But that boy went on to become a missionary in Africa and the Gospel was brought to tribes that previously had never heard the name of Jesus.

Take heart! If life has put you on the canvas and pummeled the breath out of you, it's still too early to quit. If you feel you must quit, then do it the day after tomorrow. You may have lost the battle today but you could win the war tomorrow.

As Grantland Rice, America's first great sports writer, put it, when Jesus comes to judge us He will not be so concerned about whether we won or lost, "But how we played the game!" The world measures your success, but God measures your faithfulness (1 Cor.4:2).

THE LORD IS AT HAND

Vance Hutton

To the Philippians, Paul made reference to the Lord being at hand (Phil.4:5). There is certainly a peace and great comfort in knowing that such is a reality. Think of the assurance of having help nearby. This is a promise from Him who is faithful (Heb.10:23). No wonder Peter described the promises of God as precious (2 Pet.1:4). Notice with me some of these monumental occasions when the Lord is at hand and we are so thankful for it.

1. When we turn away from sin: The Bible speaks of the prodigal son coming to himself, repenting of sin, and coming home to his father. The Lord is the Father; He is ever at hand (Lk.15:17). There is rejoicing in heaven when a sinner repents (Lk.15:7,10). The Lord delights in mercy and is ever ready to pardon (Micah 7:18; Isa.55:6-7). If we confess our faults, He is faithful and just to forgive (1 Jn.1:9). Our Lord is at hand when we turn from sin.

2. When we face the hour of temptation: We will be tempted to sin even as was our Lord (Heb.4:15). Think of the temptations our Lord faced in Matthew 4. The devil seeks to devour us through his wiles and fiery darts involving temptation (Eph.6:10-11; 1 Pet.5:8). When we are tempted, the Lord will be at hand. He promises to make

a way of escape (1 Cor.10:13). Thank God, the Lord is not far from us (Acts 17:27).

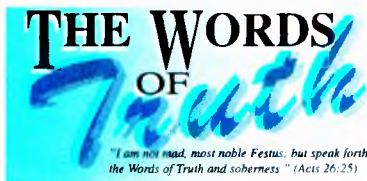
3. When we go to him in prayer: His ears are ever open to hear our prayers (1 Pet.3:12). God heard the prayers of Hezekiah (Isa.38:5) and Daniel (Dan.6) and He will hear your prayers. He is a father who cares (Mt.7:7-11). At any hour of any day, a faithful child of God can know that The God of heaven is listening to his prayer and will answer the same (1 Jn.5:14-16; 1 Jn.3:22). The Lord is at hand.

4. When we are sick, lonely, or in tears: The Lord was at hand during the sickness of Epaphroditus (Phil.2) and the loneliness of Paul in 2 Tim.4:16-17. God saw the tears of Hezekiah (Isa.38) and the sorrows of Hagar (Gen.16). The Lord is at hand when you have days of sickness, loneliness, and sorrow. He has promised to never leave nor forsake you (Heb.13:5-6).

5. When we face death: David referred to the Lord being with him when he walked through the valley of the shadow of death (Psa.23:4). This surely gave early Christians the courage needed to face death because the Lord was at hand. They were not to fear what man could do (Matt.10:28). The Lord stood upon the occasion of Stephen's death. God cares! He is ever at hand.

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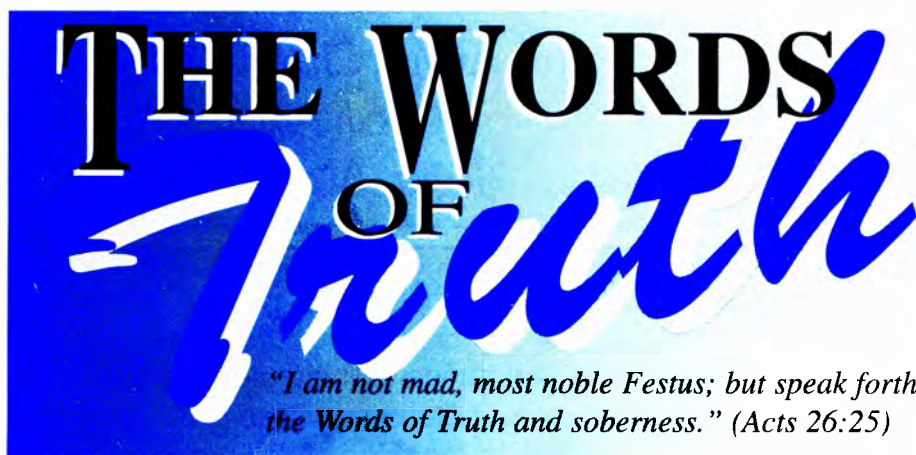
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Vol. 35 No. 32

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SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:
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 "DANDELIONS"
 Obituary of John Averageman

THE PLACE CALLED CALVARY:

"There they crucified Him."

Mark N. Posey

Luke 23:23 says, "And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left." These words describe the most significant event in the history of humanity. It is the central fact in the life of every individual, if they knew it. Notice the importance of the words: "There they crucified Him."

1) **THE PLACE:** "There". The names "Golgotha" (Hebrew) and Calvary (Latin), both mean skull. Why the name "the place of the skull?" Skulls were probably lying about. It was a place of public execution, and it possibly had a skull-like feature. Nevertheless, it was a terrible place and the name was certainly appropriate with the events that took place there.

2) **THE PEOPLE:** "They". The pronoun refers to the soldiers in this passage. But according to scripture, many shared in the guilt of Jesus' death. The Jewish leaders were guilty (Luke 23:1-2). The Jewish people in general were guilty. "Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children." (Matthew 27:25). Pilate, the 5th Roman procurator of Judea, was guilty. He "delivered Jesus to their will." (Luke 23:25).

Tradition says that Tiberius recalled Pilate from Judea and banished him to Vienna, where he committed suicide in A.D. 41 because of his decision concerning Jesus. Herod, the Tetrarch of Galilee and Pernea, was guilty. Pilate said, "No not ever Herod: for I sent you him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him". (Luke 23:15). The soldiers, who participated in the punishment and death of Christ, were guilty (Mark

15:16-20). Although it may be argued that they were merely carrying out their duty, the mistreatment they gave indicates a certain enjoyment on their part. All mankind must share in the guilt. His death was caused by our sins. "But God commandeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8). "He was wounded for our transgressions" (Isaiah 53:5).

3) **THE PENALTY:** "Crucified". Crucifixion was a horrible method of execution, but practiced by many ancient cultures, beginning with the Persians. It was used as punishment for such crimes as: treason, robbery, piracy, desertion and sedition. However, Christ was not crucified for criminal activities, but for my sins and yours (1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 John 2:2; Isaiah 53:5).

4) **THE PERSON:** "Him". The Son of God was crucified (John 3:16). He was sinless (1 Peter 2:22). He was the Savior (Matthew 1:21). But what was He like? First, He treated people with respect (John 4:9-10). No matter how harsh and arrogant people were He was always kind and respectful. Second, His life was in perfect harmony with His teaching (Hebrews 4:15; 2 Corinthians 5:21). He practiced what He preached and people were amazed, astonished and informed (Matthew 7:28,29). Third, He appealed to people's deepest needs (Luke 19:10; John 1:29). Our deepest need is the forgiveness of sins. Jesus came into this world to "save sinners" (1 Tim.1:15). Fourth, He cared enough to die (Romans 5:8; Hebrews 12:12; Phil.2:5-8). Jesus literally gave His life "a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:27-28). The word "many" includes you and me.

FROM THE EDITORS

Glenn A. Posey

*Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
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TAKE A GOOD LOOK AT TOMORROW

Solomon said, "Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Proverbs 27:1). James puts it this way, "Go to now, ye that say, to day or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get a gain; Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow..." (James 4:12-13). So, we need to take a good look at tomorrow, for it may never come for us in this life. Tomorrow may mean eternity. Boasting of tomorrow is a lazy man's way of evading the duties and responsibilities of today.

"Tomorrow" has lured its millions away from intelligent thinking, and can be one of Satan's biggest weapons. Putting off till tomorrow what you should do today is nothing more than conscience salve. It can be used to soothe over neglected duties of today. This is the day of decision. Paul said, "Today is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). It could be too late to be saved tomorrow (Jeremiah 8:20).

Our decisions to today will determine the road we will be traveling tomorrow. We should never allow tomorrow to find us going down the broad road, which is the wrong road (Matthew 7:13-14). It is easy to say, tomorrow I will do right, serve better, obey the gospel, etc. - only to find it easier to say the same thing when tomorrow comes. How foolish to have such attitude. You might not have another day to live on this side of eternity. NOW is the right time to do what you must do to be pleasing to God. Today is the first day of the rest of your existence.

"Tomorrow" leaves today's tasks undone, good books unread, kind words unsaid, church work undone, souls untaught, talents buried, love cold, and countless other good things not accomplished. Those who put off till

"tomorrow" the things that should be done today are making "tomorrow" the greatest enemy known to mankind. "Let us alone now and we will do right some day", is the cry of all who procrastinate. Some things are too urgent to put off till tomorrow. If tomorrow comes the noble impulse could become weaker and weaker until it is no longer compelling.

"Tomorrow" waits for the actions of today. Those who wait till tomorrow soon find out their "convenient season" never comes. The apostle Paul reasoned with Felix about righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come (Acts 24:25), and Felix "trembled" and said, "I will call for thee when I have a convenient season". Does that sound familiar? Agrippa's tomorrow was "Almost thou persuaded me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28). On and on the list could go. The sunset of life is going down behind the walls of all of our "tomorrow's". Will you be so thoughtless so as to say, "I will obey the gospel tomorrow, or someday", knowing that tomorrow might never come?

Satan is using "tomorrow" as his best tool to keep the lost people lost, the church from engaging in good works today, and to wreck and destroy religion in general. How many good and honest souls have you known who would have obeyed the gospel and served God if their "tomorrow" would have come. Eternity will be filled with those who had good intentions.

What will your TOMORROW hold? Where will you be TOMORROW? If you have a noble impulse to obey the gospel, do it today, because there is no guarantee that there will be a tomorrow.

Don't let tomorrow rob you of the opportunities you have TODAY!

A BAD SMELL

Glenn Colley

A man who was sleeping in his hotel room had inadvertently left the door open. Some teenage boys noticed the man and decided to play a practical joke. They took smelly Limburger cheese and spread some of it on the sleeping man's mustache.

Later, when the man awoke, he crinkled his nose and said, "This room stinks." Then, taking his complaint to the management in the lobby, he said, "This lobby stinks too!" He demanded a refund for his room and ran outside. With great disgust he shouted, "The whole world stinks!"

The point is of course that, while he blamed the world, his problems were actually with him!

Sometimes we're like that. Sometimes we dwell on the bad things so long that the "stink" goes wherever we go. The Lord has the answer for this trouble. Listen to Philippians 4:8 - "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

AVERAGE

Ronald Gilbert

Many are satisfied to be just average. Many have the potential to do great things but refuse to do so because this is not the average or normal thing to do. We eliminate our abilities many times by thinking average. We should not be satisfied to be average. We should strive to do and to be the best we can...Do you see yourself as God would have you? Paul said that he could do all things

with the Lord's help: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). How do you see yourself? See yourself as doing great things for God, because you can! You are special, you have special abilities and talents. Use them instead of making excuses! Don't let the following be your obituary. See "Obituary of John Averageman" (Page 4).

ALWAYS BE POSITIVE

Hayden Childs

One of my favorite verses is Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." In "The Power of Positive Thinking" the premise was that individuals should never allow obstacles or hardships to dominate their lives. That people had to have faith in their abilities and be self-confident. If you think "defeat" you are bound to be defeated. Mr. Peale encouraged people to fill their minds with creative and healthy thoughts, that each day should be started with affirming peaceful, happy, and contented attitudes. He believed there was a solution for every problem we face, found in our faith and belief in ourselves.

Rick Pitino, basketball coach for the N.B.A.'s Boston Celtics wrote that being positive is essential to success. We must focus on being positive in our Christian life. We know the faithful disciple wins in this life and in the life to come. I personally enjoy winning. I don't like losing. I'm thankful to be on the Lord's team today because Jesus

Christ is a winner. He conquered death. He was victorious. All who obey Him will share in that victory on the day of Judgement! (1 Cor.15:20-23).

The football teams at the University of Alabama have enjoyed many years of winning on the gridiron. Paul Bryant was the greatest football coach of all time. He was motivated to succeed in life. He had no desire to go back to Morrow Bottom, Arkansas to a life on the farm. His boys made him proud each Saturday. I enjoyed watching his team play via Television. They played sound fundamental football with enthusiasm. I believe their secret of success can be found in the title of this article, "Always Be Positive." They stepped on the football field each Saturday believing they were going to walk off that field with another victory. They were filled with desire. They were highly motivated. That is what we need to accomplish spiritually, we must motivate lost people to obey God! We want them to share in the greatest victory of all time with Christ our Savior.

“DANDELIONS”

Mike Benson

A gardener took great pride in caring for his beautiful lawn. But one particular summer, despite his efforts, it grew full of tall, yellow *dandelions*. He tried everything he could think of to rid his yard of the pesky weeds, but nothing worked. In exasperation, he sent an email to the Tennessee Department of Agriculture and explained the different products and methods he had tried. “What should I try next?” he inquired. “Try getting used to them,” came the reply.

You know if we’re not careful, we can convince ourselves that there’s a quick and easy answer to all of our problems. When in reality, sometimes our only recourse is to “try getting used to them.”

The Bible urges us to be “*patient in tribulation...*” (Rom. 12:12b; cf. Jas. 1:2ff).

Think about it...”My brethren, counted all joy when ye fall into manifold temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.”

Obituary of John Averageman

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

John Averageman was buried today.

Born: 1903 into an average family.

Schooling: Attended grade and high school and managed to graduate without distinction. Voted most likely to remain average.

Married: 1924 to Mary Mediocre.

Children: John Averageman, Jr. and Mary Mediocre Averageman.

Employment: 42 years of undistinguished service to the Mediocre Products Company. John held several unimportant positions and managed to turn out Mediocre Products, which brought him an average livelihood.

Biography: John never took a chance. He managed to develop practically none of his talents or abilities. He never became involved in anything or with anyone. His favorite book was Non-Involvement: The story of playing it safe.

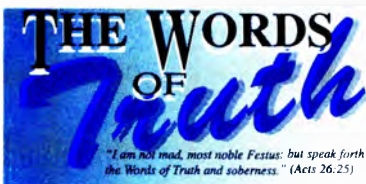
Achievements: Lived 65 years without determination, goals, desires, or confidence.

Burial Arrangements: John’s remains will rest undisturbed by visits by friends in the ordinary man’s cemetery.

*“He tried never to try,
he asked little of life, Life paid his price.”*

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)*

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STRETCHING YOUR SOUL

Bobby Dockery

A man went to a blacksmith shop one morning to pick up a hoe which had been mended. When he started to pay for the work he was told that there would be no charge for the job. Insistently, he tried to force the money into the blacksmith's hand. The blacksmith's reply is worth remembering. Again refusing payment he said to the man: "Ed, can't you let a man do something now and then -- just to stretch his soul?"

What a provocative thought! A person needs to "stretch his soul?" But how is it done?

1) COMMUNION WITH GOD STRETCHES THE SOUL. Paul spoke of some whose souls were diseased and shriveled because their worship was defective. (1 Corinthians 11:30). A proper sense of reverence and awe in the presence of God expands our spiritual perception. Large souls are developed through long hours of prayer, praise, worship, and devotion.

2) BIBLE STUDY STRETCHES THE SOUL. The study of the Bible is a broadening experience. Peter counsels us to "desire the sincere milk of the word that you may grow thereby." (1 Peter 2:2). A genuine attempt to deal honestly with the word of God will make us bigger, better people.

3) KINDNESS STRETCHES THE SOUL. To be kind is to be Godlike for "He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." (Luke 6:35). Christianity is the religion of the Second Mile, the Good Samaritan, the Alabaster Box, and the Golden Rule. Jesus was the Man who "went

about doing good." (Acts 10:38). Large hearts make for large souls!

4) FORGIVENESS STRETCHES THE SOUL. Spiritual health is conditioned upon our willingness to forgive. Jesus said: "Forgive and ye shall I be forgiven." (Luke 6:37). Resentment, hatred, and grudge-bearing are constricting bands which pinch and squeeze the soul. The refusal to forgive leads to the miniaturization of the soul.

5) SACRIFICE STRETCHES THE SOUL. "Give," Jesus said, "and it shall be given unto you." (Luke 6:38). Few people are willing to commit themselves to the soul-building discipline of sacrificial giving. Few set their giving at a level which represents real sacrifice. How sad that many souls are stunted and undernourished because they have never learned the meaning of sacrifice.

6) SERVICE STRETCHES THE SOUL. Service is the crux of Christianity. Jesus came not to be served but to serve. (Matt. 20:28). He told His disciples that "whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matt. 20:27). Jesus illustrated the meaning of service by washing His disciples' feet. (John 13:14). The extent of our service is the measure of our soul.

Dr. Kenneth Hildebrand has succinctly observed: "One of life's greatest tragedies is the person with a ten-by-twelve capacity and a two-by-four soul." May we strain to enlarge our souls to the maximum capacity so that we may be stretched to the dimensions of God!

FROM THE EDITORS

Levi Sides

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The Great Judgment Day

Daniel Webster was described as "one who walked like a man, but spoke as a god." Possibly he was the greatest orator this nation has yet produced. On one occasion he was asked what he considered the greatest thought he had ever entertained. Promptly he replied, "My greatest thought is that I shall someday stand before the judgment bar of God."

This should be a great thought to us, for the judgment is a sobering reality. It is said by some "the only things certain are death and taxes!" It is, however, "appointed unto men once to die, and AFTER THIS COMETH JUDGMENT" (Heb. 9:27). Judgment is as sure as death itself. Each one has an appointment with the great judge which he will not miss "for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Cor. 5:10). God "hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world..." (Acts 17:31). We may either be punctual or careless with our appointments in this life but the appointment of judgment shall not be missed.

The judgment will be the time to give account of ourselves unto God (Rom. 14:12). Once an infidel was introduced by a gentleman to a minister with this remark, "He never attends church." I hope you are mistaken," said the minister. "By no means," said the stranger: "I always spend Sunday in settling my accounts." "Then," replied the minister, "you will find that the Day of Judgment will be spent in the same manner." We, therefore, will give account for every opportunity, every word, and every deed that we have done on the Judgment Day.

In this article we want to point out some reasons why the Judgement will be great.

Great Judge

Jesus Christ will be the great judge. To him God hath committed all judgment (John 5:22). To him finally every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:10, 11).

Faithful, steadfast and obedient believers in Jesus may well take comfort from this truth. He that will sit upon the judgment throne on that eventful day will be their saviour, friend, high priest, elder brother, and shepherd.

The unconverted, the disobedient and unbelieving, should well be afraid. Their judge will be that

Christ whose invitation they have spurned, whose gospel they have refused to obey, and whose authority they have rejected. What great confusion will come to those who continue in their unbelief, refusing to obey Christ and completely surrender their wills to his will. It matters not how long one has "gone to church" or what claims he makes to Christ. Any lack of full surrender to Christ is a lack of belief in Christ. "Why call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). This question sobers the mind of the non-Christian and the nominal Christian alike.

Great Crowd

"Before Him shall be gathered all nations..." (Matt. 25:32). All that have ever lived, all that are now living, and all that shall live will be there. Adolph Hitler will be there! Martin Luther and the Popes of Rome will be there! Mary and Joseph, the earthly parents of Jesus, will be there! Your neighbor and enemy ill be there! Your son and your daughter will be there. Your wife & husband will be there! You and I will be there!

As we have said, no one will escape the summons of Christ. Those who found no delight in worship, refusing to attend worship services, will be there in that great assembly. The hypocrite in the Church will also be there. Those who are unprepared for judgment will be there. Those who loved Christ and faithfully served him will be there.

Great Separation

The purpose of the judgment day is to judge the people and to give to each what is due him. This will necessitate a separation, for there will be present both the bad and the good. The separation will be based upon the way people have lived. They will not be separated according to social standings, education, or financial ability. Those things are purely earthly and will not enter into the final analysis of things. Jesus said: "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and known of mine" (John 10:14). "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12). "Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41). These scriptures make it clear that no mistakes will be made and that each will receive all that is coming to him. If he is due to go to

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SPURT AND SPUTTER RELIGION

David Pharr

Did you ever have a car that would run well for a short spurt and then the motor would sputter?

It appears that some folks have a spurt and sputter religion.

Something will stimulate their interest and they will have a spurt of enthusiasm. For a while they will be seen at all services. They will volunteer for various duties. There is a serious enthusiasm for study and even for teaching others.

But after a while their engine sputters. In a car we might diagnose the problem as "water in the gas line," but for the sputtering Christian, the problem may be "worldliness in the spirit line."

We admire the zealous spurt and would do nothing to discourage it, but we are always saddened when it becomes a sputter. What is needed is a Christian life that runs well for the whole trip. It's not the short run that counts, but the faithfulness in the long haul. We need to be committed to the marathon, not just a hundred yard dash!

To the Galatians, Paul wrote: "Ye did run well; who did hinder you?" (Galatians 5:7).

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58).

The Great Judgment Day, *continued from Page 2*

hell, then to hell he will go; on the other hand, all of those will go to heaven that have prepared themselves for that place. Great indeed will be this separation!

Great Blessing

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. To have the joy of Heaven is indeed a great blessing.

The Judgment Day, to God's people, will be a glorious day. It will be a day of entering into the place prepared by Christ for his people (Jno. 14:1-8; Rom. 8:17).

Great Condemnation

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand. Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41). While the judgment day will be a glorious day for God's people it will be a day of terror for the wicked. It will be a day when every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus is the Christ. "For it is written. As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:11, 12). It will be too late then to receive any reward for confessing Christ. How much better it would be for all mankind to honor and obey God while we live here on this earth and go to heaven when we die than to

live a wicked life and go to hell! When we meditate on these things, we can understand what Paul meant when he said: "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences" (2 Cor. 5:11). Certainly it will be a day of terror for the wicked, for all who have not had time in this life to give their lives to Christ. "For I was an hungered, and ye have me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not," (Matt. 25:42, 48), "inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me" (Matt. 25:45).

Great Exodus

The writer of the book of Matthew used but one short sentence to describe this event: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Matt. 25:46). Both classes will go into a state of existence that is to last forever. Eternal life is just as long as eternal punishment. We have read of the last hours of some condemned prisoner before he walks the few steps to the electric chair; we have read his farewell message of warning; but in all of this there is nothing as serious and solemn as the final doom of the wicked. This great tragedy can be avoided every one by obedience to the gospel and diligently living the Christian life.

Are you ready for this great day of judgment????

MAKING GOD IN MAN'S IMAGE

Johnny Ramsey

The Bible order is man made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). The creature should not reply against the Creator (Romans 9:20). However, millions today "do not like to retain God in their knowledge" and many even attempt to worship the creature more than the Creator (Romans 1:20-28). There is no fear of Jehovah before their eyes (Romans 3:18) even though "our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). It is still a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:31). But, sadly, just as some "laughed Jesus to scorn" (Mark 5:40), today we see puny men mocking God. Their ridicule will turn to mourning when they reap the lonely dividends of their iniquity (Galatians 6:7-8).

"There is a sad day coming, a sad day coming,
There is a sad day coming by and by
When the sinner shall hear his doom:
'Depart, I Know You Not'
Are you ready for that day to come?"

Have you ever realized that most of the basic errors in religion are based on a faulty view of God? Men try to force upon Jehovah their own concepts and ideas thus making the Creator in their own image. Let us notice three applications of the principle.

1) Man Thinks One Religion Is As Good As Another

Even though Numbers 23:19 tells us that God is not like man, the human family persists in trying to make the Lord view things from a finite perspective. Jehovah, in His Word, reveals but one church purchased with the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28). Emphatically Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:20:

"There is yet but one body."

Jesus promised in Matthew 16:18 to build His church and

God is glorified therein (Ephesians 3:21). No religion, founded by mere men, could compare favorably with that divinely arranged system. Men labor in vain to establish something the Lord did not build (Psalm 127:1).

2) Man Is A Respector Of Persons

Notoriously we are biased and partial in our evaluations. God--who is not carnal--sent His only begotten Son to "taste of death for every man" (Hebrews 2:9). Therefore, we all stand on level ground at the foot of the Cross. Of one blood all nations derive, in every nation those who obey God are pleasing to the Almighty and every creature under heaven is privileged to hear and embrace the gospel (Acts 10:34; Acts 17; Mark 16:15). Jehovah is not parochial in His evaluations. We dare not try to make the Maker in our image (Psalms 50:21).

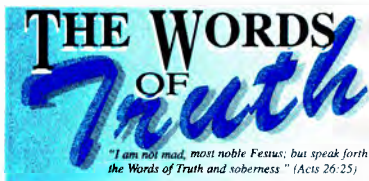
3) Man Does Not Want To Accept Hell As A Reality

In Isaiah 55:8-9 we read of those who would not think as God does and therefore they would not follow the ways of Divinity. But, when God speaks it always comes to pass (Psalms 33:9), for it is impossible for Him to lie (Romans 3:4; Hebrews 6:18). When religious liberals try to accept what they choose to and reject the uncomfortable passages in the Bible they show their true existential colors. In Christianity one does not pick and choose for there are no optional commands! The same Bible that describes the glories of heaven depicts also the agonies of hell (Matthew 25:46). Rather than concoct a system of doctrine that rejects Bible truth one ought to reject error and immorality so he can miss Hell! Jehovah reigneth in absolute sovereignty (Psalms 46:1; 93:1; Romans 9). May we be wise enough to submit wholly and humbly to His blessed will. "For, if God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

May we never be guilty of attempting to make God in our image. What a mess the world would be in if we should succeed!

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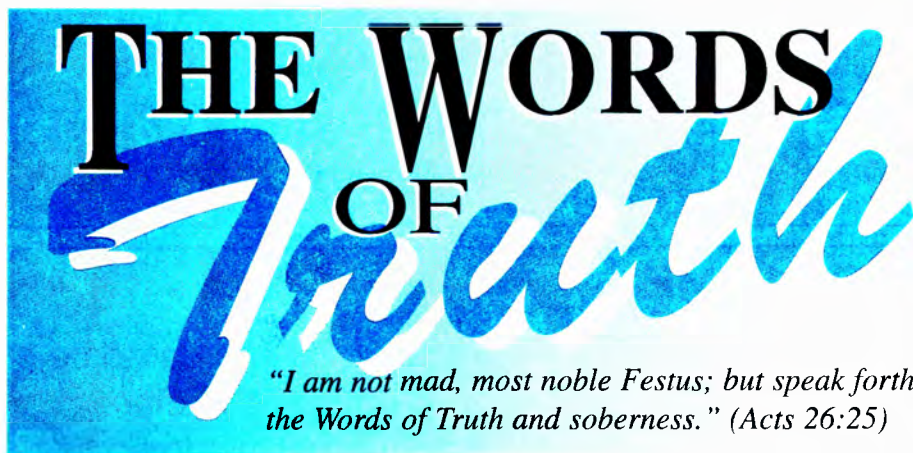
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Vol. 35 No. 34

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**SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:
ARE WE SAVED BY KEEPING THE
TEN COMMANDS?
THAT LEAVES ONLY ME TO
BLAME
GREAT BIBLE PRINCIPLES
THE ABUSE OF A GOOD THING**

ARE WE SAVED BY KEEPING THE TEN COMMANDS?

Hayden Childs

The apostle Paul in Galatians 3:24 informs us of God's purpose for the Law of Moses. "Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

One Gadsden, Alabama judge has caused quite a stir not only in our state, but around the world with his commitment to keep the Ten Commandments hanging on the wall in his chambers. One group at least is calling Judge Moore a modern day Daniel.

Above the head of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court are the Ten Commandments, with the great American eagle protecting them. Moses is included among the great lawgivers in Herman A. MacNeil's marble sculptor group on the east front. The crier who opens each session closes with the words: "God save the United States and the Honorable Court."

My question to you is this, "Is God going to save the Ten Commandment keepers in our nation and around the world? If keeping the Ten Commands had brought you and me salvation there would have been no reason for God to send Jesus to die on the cross of Calvary for mankind. Notice Galatians 3:21: "For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law."

I confidently affirm to you dear readers that the Christian is free from the Law of Moses. (Eph.2:13-16; Col.1:13-15).

1. The law of Moses was temporary and limited.

Jehovah gave the Law of Moses to the Jews 430 years after the promise was given to Abraham (Gal.3:15-17). This law was not given to the fathers, but to those whom Jehovah had brought out of Egyptian bondage.

Not only was the law of Moses for a select group (Israel only) but, it was also temporary. God reveals this through His prophet Jeremiah (31:31-34).

When the work of the law was accomplished, it became null and void. (Gal.3:19).

2. The law of Moses was a dividing wall.

At one time Gentiles had no hope of salvation

(Eph.2:11-16; Col.2:145). God erected this dividing wall to prepare the way for Christ (Gal.3:19;4:7). God taught Israel they could not save themselves by law keeping (Rm.8:3; Gal.2:16). He wanted the Jews to understand how terrible sin really was (Rm.3:19-20; 7:13).

Also, Jehovah used this wall to teach the Gentiles that they could not save themselves through their own wisdom (1 Cor.1:21).

3. Christ abolished the law of Moses.

God proved that all people are guilty before Him (Rm.3:19-23). The law of Moses, served its purpose as a "tutor" to bring mankind to Christ. He fulfilled the promise of Jeremiah 31:31-14 and took away the dividing wall through the death of His only begotten Son Jesus Christ (Heb.10:8-9; Col.2:14-15; Gal.5:1).

This means that we today as Christians are under no obligation to refrain from eating certain foods because of a religious law. We are not obligated to circumcise male newborns. We are not obligated to follow the Ten Commandments as a system of salvation. We are not obligated to make distinctions between flesh. We are not obligated to offer animal sacrifices to God. We are not obligated to make a yearly journey to Jerusalem. We are not required to follow the pattern of government of the Jews. We are under no obligation whatsoever to the Law of Moses (2 Cor.3:7-17; Gal.2:21). We are free from the "ministry of death" (2 Cor.3:7), and the physical tabernacle and its worship (Heb.9:1). One, by virtue of Jesus' death and our obedience to the gospel, can have life, peace and reconciliation (Mt.5:17-20,21-22,27-28,31-32,33-36,38-39,43-48).

4. All men are obligated to obey the New Covenant.

Jesus has all authority today. Moses has none! (Mt.28:18; Jn.17:2). Christ instituted a New Covenant through the shedding of His precious blood and sacrificial death (Heb.9:13-14; 10:14).

I affirm today that all people everywhere must according to God's Word obey Christ's New Covenant. (Mk.16:15-16; Rm.1;16).

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FROM THE EDITORS

Glenn A. Posey

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THAT LEAVES ONLY ME TO BLAME

Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed Satan (Gen.3). It seems that mankind has always played the "blame game." The blame has to be placed on someone or somewhere for man's failings. But, if you will be honest with yourself, the bottom line leaves only me to blame.

1. God loved mankind, and sent his son to this world to provide for man's redemption (John 3:16-17; Rom. 5:8). Paul said, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men" (Titus 2:10). God wants all men to be saved (2 Peter 3:9). So, if I am lost, that leaves only me to blame.

2. Christ died on the cross to provide a way for man to deal with sin (Heb. 9:15-17). Through Christ's blood that was shed on the old rugged cross, man has a way to have his sins cleansed (1 John 1:7-10). Paul said, God was in Christ reconciling a world to himself (2 Cor. 5:19). Therefore, if my sins are not forgiven, that leaves only me to blame. It is not God's, nor Christ's fault, but mine. The provisions are there, what will I do?

3. The Holy Spirit revealed God's scheme of redemption to mankind through the prophets of the Old Testament, and the apostles in the New Testament (Heb. 1:1-2; John 13-17). The New Testament is the pattern by

which all men must go by in order to be saved. It has been delivered to men (Jude 3). If I do not know what to do to be saved, that leaves only me to blame.

4. Godly parents try desperately to bring their children up in the right way (Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4). They pray with them, they play with them, they take them to Bible school, and worship, they set good examples before them. Godly parents do everything humanly possible to provide for their spiritual welfare. So, if I'm not saved, that leaves only me to blame.

5. The church provides Bible classes, worship services, gospel meetings, Vacation Bible Schools, gospel singing, fellowships of all sorts, youth activities, etc., etc. in keeping with the New Testament pattern. All these things of course are just carrying out the instructions of the Lord. If I am ignorant of God's word, if I don't grow as a Christian like I should, then that leaves only me to blame.

Be totally honest with yourself. Who is to blame if you are not what you should be in the sight of God? Paul says that the Gentiles were without excuse (Rom. 1:20). Don't ever be guilty of trying to shift your responsibility off on someone else. Place the blame where it belongs.

ARE WE SAVED BY KEEPING THE TEN COMMANDS?, *continued from Page 1*

It is sad indeed when people will pervert the gospel of Christ and teach a false message that people must obey the Ten Commandments, a law that cannot give life, but only death (Rm.3:20). We must obey and follow the law of Christ, (Gal.6:2), the perfect law of liberty (Jas.1:25; 2:12).

Remember, Jesus said, "If you love me, keep MY commandments" (Jn.14:15,21).

Today, Jesus has commanded faith (1 Pet.2:7-10), repentance (Acts 17:30,31), confession (Rm.10:9,10), baptism (Gal.3:26-29), faithfulness (Rev.14:12-13).

GREAT BIBLE PRINCIPLES

Johnny Ramsey

Throughout the Scriptures we can find noble principles that guide our lives successfully. These are eternal truths that bolster and encourage our decisions and destiny. Such powerful points strengthen our resolve and enlighten our days as pilgrims on our way through foreign territory to the beautiful home of the soul.

"No matter what may be the test,
Lean weary one upon His breast,
God will take care of you!"

When we learn to put our ultimate trust in the One who made all things, (Proverbs 3:5-7), we have proper direction in life. The path that leads to glory may seem paradoxical but it is nevertheless worth the struggle and heartache.

" I ask for health
That I might achieve
I was made weak
That I might do better things."

Paul's thorn in the flesh actually made him stronger (II Cor. 12:9). It has been well-stated that "courage is fear that has said its prayers." With steadfast loyalty we receive the necessary peace from God to see us through the darkest hour and the loneliest day (Psa. 91:15).

"Red and deep our wounds may be
But after all the pain
God's own finger touches us
And we are healed again."

One of the foremost Biblical principles is the providence of the Almighty! The Psalmist makes it clear (18:19) that the Creator delivers us because He delights in us. There is a God in Heaven (Dan. 2:28), but He is very near to us (Acts 17:27). He will never forsake us as we seek to do the will of Heaven (Hebrews 13:5), and every necessary blessing will be provided (James 1:17). Jehovah grants us comfort (II Cor. 1:3), protection (I Cor. 10:13), and joy in believing (Romans 15:13). Tennyson wrote:

"More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of."

God is our refuge, light, strength, rewarder and our leaning-post (Psalms 27; Deut. 33:27). He will "guide us continually" (Isaiah 58:11), and grant all our needs (Phil. 4:19).

"God is the fountain whence
Ten thousand blessings flow
To Him my life, my health and friends
And every good I owe."

Another tremendous Bible principle is the splendid nature of mankind's expression of gratitude toward God. Paul reminded the brethren at Thessalonica to always give thanks and Philippians is remembered for the cogent exclamation:

"Rejoice in the Lord always."

We should bear much fruit for the Savior because He has done so much for us (John 15:8; Romans 7:4). It is natural for us, so richly blessed, to be full of thanksgiving for the abundant life Christ provides (Phil. 4:6). Joyous Christians seek for ways to respond graciously to the bounty Heaven bequeaths by extending love and kindness to those less fortunate (Gal. 6:9-10). We dare not dwell upon momentary sorrow in our own sojourn but reach out to the world with salvation's message of hope.

"I've trusted many a friend that failed
And left me to weep alone,
But I've found enough of my friends true blue,
To make me keep trusting on."

Whatever men may say or do we have a Friend who never fails (John 15:13). This Bible point undergirds our faith!

There is another wonderful principle embedded in the sacred text that demands our utmost attention. It is the salient truth that apart from the death of Christ we would all be hopelessly and forever lost! By the grace of God, Jesus was the One who died for all (II Cor. 5:14). He took our sins to Calvary (I Peter 2:24). While we were yet sinners our Redeemer died for us (Romans 5:8). The Messiah laid down His very life for us that heaven might receive us home to glory (Acts 2:36). The lamb of God took our place that sin might be overwhelmed by His vicarious offering (I John 2:2; 4:14). Kidnapped by Satan, captivated by sin, our hope nearly gone, a Savior came to pay the ransom price (Romans 7:13-14; I Tim. 2:6). Making peace through the blood of the Cross (Col. 1:20), we can find the sunlight of His love so precious that angels rejoice in heaven (Luke 15:10).

Therefore, in view of God's providence, Christ's death and the gratitude of human hearts, we dare not squander our time and talents in Satan's service but do all to the glory of the Father (Col. 3:17). These powerful principles of the Holy Scriptures should shape our lives into the canopy of heaven and the mural of those matters that are high and holy. We should daily praise our Maker for our rich and brilliant heritage. Isaac Watts wrote in a classic hymn:

"Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting Thou art God,
To endless years the same!"

Let us be ever humble in the service of our blessed Lord.

THE ABUSE OF A GOOD THING

Bobby Duncan

As long as I can remember, most Churches of Christ have provided on Sunday evening the opportunity to eat the Lord's Supper for those who could not be present for the morning assembly. This is both scriptural and in harmony with good judgment, since the New Testament does not specify a particular hour of the day upon which the Supper is to be eaten, and since there are often circumstances which make it impossible for some to be present at the morning worship assembly.

Years ago it was quite common to hear an announcement near the close of the Sunday evening service that was worded something like this: "The Lord's Supper is prepared for those who were providentially hindered from being present this morning." While *providentially hindered* might not be the best choice of words, the brother making the announcement was being careful to emphasize the fact that the Lord's Supper had not been prepared simply for the convenience of those who chose not to be present for the morning worship. It was rather for those who, because of circumstances beyond their control, could not reasonably be expected to be present for the morning assembly. A sick family member might require one to stay with him, or some unavoidable emergency may arise. There are those whose jobs sometimes demand they miss the morning assembly. It is good that those so hindered do not have to forego worship altogether, but can engage in all items thereof at the evening service.

Naturally, good things have always been subject to abuse by some, and the practice of making the Lord's Supper available on Sunday night is no exception.

There have always been those who would allow trivial matters to keep them away on Sunday morning, and then would come to observe the Supper on Sunday evening. Perhaps we have neglected to teach on the subject as we should, and when teaching is neglected, practice will suffer.

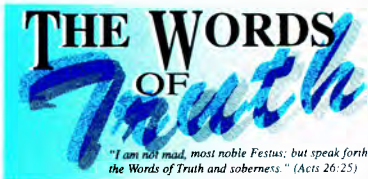
It is abusing a good practice when one is simply too lazy to come on Sunday morning, and then eats the Lord's Supper on Sunday night. Those who choose to engage in some recreational activity, or entertain guests, or simply relax on Sunday morning while the faithful are assembled for worship are sinning in so doing. They are in clear violation of Hebrews 10:25: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." It is mockery for such a person to come on Sunday night to observe the Lord's Supper, pretending he appreciates the death and suffering of Jesus.

I am so glad we make that sacred feast available on Sunday night, as well as on Sunday morning. I would have to think any sincere Christian is deprived of participating in that divine memorial just because he was deprived of being present at the morning assembly.

But let it never be thought that the Lord's Supper is provided on Sunday evening for the convenience of those whose priorities are so warped as to think they can negligently choose not to come on Sunday morning, and then worship acceptably Sunday night. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

Vol. 35 No. 35

August 27, 1998

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QUARANTINE THE "CHANGERS"
TO SAVE OUR CHILDREN
OUR LORD PRAYED
JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

QUARANTINE THE "CHANGERS" TO SAVE OUR CHILDREN

E. Claude Gardner

In this century the church has had to cope with several splinter movements. In the teens there was Bollism which blossomed into the struggle with premillennialism in the '30s. Then came Ketchersideism, which was extremely radical, but later swung to the very liberal view. Another heartache was the battle over support of orphan homes and church cooperation. For decades the church was thwarted by Sommerism, and there is still a residue in some quarters.

For the last 30 or 40 years, there has existed a strong undercurrent of liberalism. This is now a force which the church in the mainstream must face. It promotes fundamental changes in teaching and practice. Some of the most visible and articulate among us are in this scholarly and well-financed group.

"Changers" is an umbrella term to cover various and sundry ideas novel to the New Testament. Not everyone in the camp of the radical changers agrees totally, but there is agreement with the general thrust toward a liberal slant.

To identify the proponents and fellow travelers - preachers, teachers, church leaders, or members - what are some of the teachings flowing from their mouth or pew?

- *Open fellowship with other religious bodies, especially the evangelicals;
- *Acceptance of the independent Christian Church;

- *Promoter of unity forums with the Christian Church;
- *Instrumental music is not sinful and is a non-issue;
- *Grace is a constant topic;
- *Exalting Christ but downplaying the church;
- *Gashing the church and finding little good about it and in contrast being complimentary of other religious groups;
- *Exhibiting cynicism;
- *Teaching that the church is a denomination and one part of the denominational framework;
- *Worship is to be changed to be more emotional in the Pentecostal denominational style;
- *Teaching obedience and commandments is legalism;
- *Women should have a leading role in the church;
- *Elders have no authority in a congregation;
- *Advocacy of the Holy Spirit empowering us in sensational ways apart from the Word of God;
- *After ignoring "doctrine" there may be major stress on social issues;
- *Salvation is by faith and baptism is not essential for the forgiveness of sins;
- *The church is not the kingdom and we should pray for the kingdom to come;
- *Pattern theology is an abomination;
- *Tradition is bashed and change is touted;
- *The church needs to be restructured;
- *The restoration of New Testament Christianity is irrelevant and impossible;
- *Restoration of the church is not finished;

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FROM THE EDITORS

Levi Sides

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OUR LORD PRAYED

In a day when men are so busy--so pre-occupied--that they do not pray enough, it is good to remember that our Lord prayed often. He sometimes prayed all night. For example, he prayed all night before he named the twelve apostles. He also prayed at moments of special significance. He prayed just before he raised Lazarus from the dead. He prayed earnestly and repeatedly in the garden of Gethsemane on the night before his crucifixion.

Not only did our Lord himself often engage in prayer, he also taught his disciples to pray. The model prayer which he gave his disciples, as we find it in Matt. 6:9-13, is familiar to us: "Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."

Let us notice a few of the highlights of this model prayer. It begins, "Our Father." He is the Creator of the universe. "He holds the whole world in his hands." He is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. He is from everlasting to everlasting. He is the First Cause, the Prime Mover. But far above all else, in so far as man is concerned, he is our heavenly Father. We aspire to the lofty goal outlined by Paul, "...if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17).

Then comes the expression, "Who art in heaven." Where is heaven? The Jews spoke of three heavens: (1) The atmosphere about the earth, (2) The starry heavens of space, and (3) The abode of God. Atheists sometimes make fun of those who speak of

"going up" to heaven. In a time when the foremost scientists readily admit they are baffled by such things as quasars and pulsars--why should it be thought incredible that the Creator of these mysteries could fashion a place for himself. Furthermore, heaven is a spiritual realm; it is pointless to try to locate it in some physical setting.

Next comes the phrase, "Hallowed be thy name." Jehovah is the giver of all things good: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning." (James 1:17). We often sing the hymn:

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly hosts;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen."

The prayer continues, "Thy kingdom come." The coming of the kingdom occupied much of the longing thoughts of the common people as well as the written words of the prophets. Daniel, Joel, Isaiah, and other of the prophets longingly spoke of the time when the kingdom would come. The kingdom was to come with power (Mark 9:1) accompanied by the Holy Spirit (John 16:7,13) for whom the disciples were to tarry in the city of Jerusalem (Luke 24:49). All of this occurred on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). After this time, every reference indicates the kingdom to be in existence, not something yet to come in the future. When we pray "Thy kingdom come," we really mean "Thy kingdom come to all men," or "Thy kingdom spread or continue."

We next read, "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." Man is not an automaton; he is free to choose. In fact, the theme of choice runs throughout the Bible and the

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QUARANTINE THE “CHANGERS” TO SAVE OUR CHILDREN, *continued from Page 1*

*Using deductions based on Scripture cannot establish truth;

*Silence of the Scriptures is not prohibitive;

*Greatly enamored by radical youth workshops;

*And as did Paul, I would add “and such like.”

When any person or a congregation espouses these beliefs or practices or some of them, it is evidence that the *changers* are there. When this happens, many heartaches and divisions will come.

The *changers* should be quarantined at once. This must be done to save our children, for the peace of the brethren, and for unity in

the brotherhood. Radical change advocates will divide the brotherhood by the espousal of liberal theology.

We are at the stage where we should start the quarantine.

Advocates of this splinter group make the charge of polarization when objections are raised to their “changes.”

As a disclaimer: those who hold to New Testament Christianity do not believe matters of opinion should be tests of fellowship. The issue is in changing and rejecting the basics of Bible teaching and substantive matters.

OUR LORD PRAYED, *continued from Page 2*

great invitation of Christ points up man's freedom to accept or reject him. The time and place of your birth, the color and form of your body, these things God decided.

Whether you serve him or not is to be determined by you. He stands at the door of your heart, but he will not come in uninvited.

What a great privilege, yet what a great responsibility, it is to be a creature of choice. May it be that each of us will come to desire that God's will be done here on earth as it is in heaven. Think what a beautiful world this would be if the majority of men were to obey his will here as it is obeyed in heaven.

Next, “Give us this day our daily bread.” It is axiomatic that we sin if we do not pray for our food and we go hungry if we do not work for it. Solomon, perhaps belatedly, prayed, “...Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is Jehovah? Or lest I be poor, and steal, and use profanely the name of my God.” (Prov. 30:8,9). Paul puts it in this light, “Godliness with contentment is great gain: for brought nothing into the world, for neither

can we carry anything out; but having food and covering we shall be therewith content” (I Tim. 6:6-7).

Then Jesus instructed his disciples to pray, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” We tread on extremely dangerous ground when we pray this prayer unless we are willing to forgive freely and completely all those who sin against us. Otherwise we have no forgiveness from God.

“Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us evil.” God does not solicit man to sin; man is not tempted by God although God allows man to be tested. Though Satan buffet us God will not allow us to be tempted or tried beyond what we can bear (I Cor. 10:15). He knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation (II Peter 2:9).

Finally there comes the expression “Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.” This is the culmination of the model prayer which Christ taught his disciples. It brings this great prayer to a close in a crescendo of praise to God who created the universe and who rules over it.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

Wayne Jackson

It is a tragic reality that so many who profess to believe in the Biblical doctrine of "justification by faith" actually have very little, if any at all, understanding of what that involves. One of the premier passages dealing with this topic is found in Paul's letter to the Roman saints. Five great truths are set forth in this thrilling passage. In this article, let us reflect upon them.

The Text Examined

"Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:1-2).

First, there is divine provision. Salvation was made possible "through our Lord Jesus Christ." Without the sacrifice of the Son of God, the world would have been utterly without any hope of salvation. Jesus is "the way" (Jn. 14:6). Surely no one would entertain the notion that God sent Christ to the cross when there was some other option for human redemption.

Second, human responsibility is necessary in order to access the grace of God. Twice in this passage, Paul uses the expression "by faith" to summarize the personal initiative that one must exercise to receive the blessings of the gospel. Moreover, a study of the term "faith," elsewhere in this letter, reveals that it is an "obedient" faith that saves, not a mere mental inclination to "trust" the Lord (cf. Rom. 1:5; 2:8; 6:17; 10:16; 16:26). In addition to believing the facts regarding Jesus and trusting Him, the apostle included repentance (Rom. 2:4), confession of one's faith

(Rom. 10:9-10), and immersion into newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4).

Third, Paul announces the immediate blessing that is attendant to one's response to the gospel. He is "justified," i.e., considered as though he were actually "just" (based upon the efficacy of Christ's death). Additionally, the newly born Christian enjoys "peace with God." Prior to conversion, he was in a hostile position - dead in sin (cf. Eph. 2:1ff).

Fourth, there is the abiding commitment that is necessary for the retention of a spiritual relationship with God. Of that realm of grace, Paul says; "Wherein we stand." The verb is a perfect tense form used as a present (R.C.H. Lenski, Paul's Epistle to the Romans, p. 335), thus we continue to stand. We purposefully remain in a state of fidelity. In another passage the apostle affirms that we are saved "If [we] hold fast the word" which was preached to us (I Cor. 15:2).

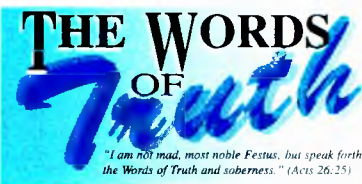
Fifth, we rejoice because of the ultimate hope which we have of the "glory of God." This represents a summation of all the blessings to be received at the final consummation of things, when we are in the very presence of the Creator Himself, and "see Him even as He is" (I Jn. 3:2).

Conclusion

The profound truths set forth in Romans 5:1-2 stand in bold relief to: [1] the Roman Catholic dogma of justification on the basis of meritorious works and [2] the Protestant notion of "salvation by faith alone," before and with additional acts of obedience.

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Vol. 35 No. 36

September 3, 1998

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THOUGHTS ON THE LORD'S SUPPER
INSPECTION
THE CARDINAL PRINCIPLE OF
EVERYDAY RELIGION
ATTITUDE IN PRAYER

THOUGHTS ON THE LORD'S SUPPER

Joe T. Spivy, Sr.

Luke recorded in Acts 20:7 that upon the first day of the week that "the disciples came together to BREAK BREAD." Jesus, on the very night that he was betrayed, when he was eating the passover with his disciples, gave them an insight into the importance of the Lord's Supper which was to be eaten in the kingdom of God. As the passover was a memorial feast for the Jews, commemorating when death spared the Israelites where blood was on the door posts, so the Lord's Supper is a memorial feast. Jesus said in Luke 22:19 "this do in remembrance of me." Later Paul would say with reference to both the fruit of the vine and the bread that it was to be, quoting from Jesus, "in remembrance of me" (I Corinthians 11:24,25). Is it not a shame that the Corinthians had abused the observance of that MEMORIAL FEAST.

Today when we are giving thanks before partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, why do we give thanks for everything and sometimes fail to express thanksgiving for the bread and the fruit of the vine? With reference to the action of the Lord before he gave unto the disciples the fruit of the vine and the bread, it is said that he "blessed it" (Matt 26:26; Mark 14:22), that he "gave thanks" (Matt. 26:27; Luke 22:19), and after "giving thanks" (Mark 14:23; I Cor.

11:24). The New American Standard Version renders Matthew 26:26 and Mark 14:22 "after a blessing."

Albert Barnes, in commenting on Matthew 26:26 said, "And blessed it. Or sought a blessing on it; or gave thanks to God for it. The word rendered blessed not unfrequently means to give thanks. It is also to be remarked that some manuscripts have the word rendered gave thanks, instead of the one translated blessed." (*Notes on the New Testament*, Barnes, Albert, page 282). H. Leo Boles said "some think that the word 'blessed' means more than giving of thanks; that it signified a prayer for all the blessings which may properly be desired for the object which is blessed." (*A Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew*, Boles, H. Leo, Page 504) There should be great emphasis placed upon the giving of thanks for the bread and the fruit of the vine as was done by the Lord. This will cause us to remember the Lord as he instructed, "in remembrance of me," and cause us to be thankful for those items. If we fail to thank God for the Lord's Supper, and yet in that context we thank him for the lovely day, beautiful weather, many blessings of life and other interesting and important things, are we following his example?

INSPECTION

Mike Benson

When we go over to the produce section of the local grocery, we carefully inspect the fruit, don't we?

We thump the watermelons.

We smell the cantelopes.

We gently squeeze the tomatoes.

We visually examine the grapes.

Surely none of us would purchase a piece of fruit without first engaging in some sort of thorough examination, right? And yet, how many of us accept religious doctrines and practices without proper scrutiny?

On one occasion Jesus said, "Beware of false

prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn-bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit...Therefore by their fruits you will know them" (Matt. 7:15-17,20).

Dear friend, before you "buy" what a preacher says, make sure you inspect the fruits (cf, Rom. 16:17; I Jn. 4:1) of such. You wouldn't want a bitter piece of fruit, would you? Think about it.

FROM THE EDITORS

Glenn A. Posey

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THE CARDINAL PRINCIPLES OF EVERYDAY RELIGION

INTRODUCTION

- A. The test for our lesson is taken from Deuteronomy 10:12-13.
- B. Moses had led the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage forty (40) years earlier, and now they are in the plains of Moab, poised to cross the Jordan and possess the land flowing with milk and honey.
- C. Romans 15:4, states that these things are written for our learning.
- D. Notice what Moses told the children of Israel:
"And now, O Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but:
 1. To fear the Lord thy God,
 2. To walk in all his ways,
 3. And to love him
 4. And to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and will all thy soul,
 5. To keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good."
- E. Although these principles were for the Israelites which lived under the Old Testament era, they are also taught in the New Testament, the law under which you and I live today.
- F. Christianity is not cheap life. It costs something because it offers so much. God's promises are so great and precious that it would be unthinkable to desire them on an unconditional basis.
- G. Notice the five key words in our text: Fear, walk, love, serve, and keep.
- H. Religion is a way of life. So when things cease to be a matter of religion, man finds himself in serious trouble.
- B. God speaks to man through the Bible. (John 12:48).
- C. Knowing this fact, then, this calls for man reading and studying the Bible on a daily basis (2 Tim. 2:15).
- D. II Timothy 3:15-17; Galatians 1:11-12.
- E. When one approaches the Bible in study, he should realize:
 - (1) Profitable Bible study calls for priority of Bible study. It must come before magazines, news papers, etc.
 - (2) Profitable Bible study calls for personal study. Else one would have second hand faith etc.
 - (3) Profitable Bible study should be engaged in prayerfully.
 - (4) The Bible should be studied with a purpose in mind. To see what the Lord requires one to do to be saved.
 - (5) Profitable Bible study is realized, when we see that the Bible is the most practical book ever written.
 - (6) Profitable Bible study demands the willingness to practice the truths that are written therein; John 7:17; James 1:21-27.
 - (7) Profitable Bible study is a reality when one ponders (meditates) upon God's word. (Prov. 4:23-27; I Tim. 4:15-16; Psa. 1:1-2; Psa. 119:15; Psa.119:23, 48, 78, 148)
 - (8) Profitable Bible study is a reality when man knows that his greatest need is pardon. (Rom. 3:23; Acts 8 (Simon the Sorcerer)
 - (9) Profitable Bible study must be done privately
 - (10) Profitable Bible study must be done with patience: James 1:3; Luke 21:19; I cor. 3:1; Heb. 5:12-14; I Peter 2:2; 3:18.
 - (11) Profitable Bible study is precious because of an appreciation of the Bible. Psa. 139: 17,18; Ida. 55:9; I Peter 1:4.

DISCUSSION

- I. EVERY DAY LET GOD SAY SOMETHING TO YOU.
 - A. Hebrews 1:1,2. God speaks to us through His son. (Matt. 17:1-5; Acts 3:22-23).

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THE CARDINAL PRINCIPLE OF EVERYDAY RELIGION,

continued from Page 2

- (12) When the Bible is studied with pleasure, it is profitable.
- (13) When the Bible is studied in search of peace it is profitable. Job 22:21; Isa. 48:22; Isa. 48:18; John 14:27; Rom. 8:6; Phil. 4:6,7.

II. EVERY DAY SAY SOMETHING TO GOD.

- A. We will not walk alone, God is with us (Psa. 23; Heb. 13:4,5).
- B. Paul said, "Pray without ceasing." (I Thess 5:17)
- C. Sincere prayer opens up the heart to God and an open heart is essential to one's religious life.
- D. A person cannot pray without being made mindful of his own weaknesses and frailties.
- E. Abraham was a praying man (Genesis 18,19);
Daniel was also a praying man (Daniel 3 etc)
Paul was a praying man (Acts 16--in person)
Jesus was always praying (Luke 22)
- F. When a person takes a good look at his own frailties, he is better prepared to look for help that he needs from God.
- G. No Christian should ever begin a day or task without first praying to God.

III. EVERY DAY SAY SOMETHING FOR GOD.

- A. Every Christian should share the good news of the gospel with everyone he comes in contact with.
- B. Jesus commissioned the church to preach the gospel to every creature (Mk. 16:16).
- C. Stand up, speak up, and give up. A word fitly spoken is powerful indeed.

- D. Some of the characters of the Bible are just like many today, men and women who will share the good news of the gospel as far as they can.
- E. The Bible is designed to meet man where he is. So, Christians must have the message of the gospel on the tongues tip at all times.

F. Speak in God's behalf every day of your life.

IV. EVERY DAY DO SOMETHING FOR GOD.

- A. Look for opportunities to be a servant (Matt. 20:28; Gal. 6:10).
- B. In 2 Samuel 4, King David was looking for an opportunity to do good for Jonathan's sake.
- C. Song: I want to be a worker for the Lord.
- D. Paul told Titus to "Be ready unto every good work" and "to maintain good works" (Titus 3:1,14)
- E. Dorcas was full of good works and alms deeds" (Acts 9:36).
- F. The Bible says we will be rewarded "according to our works" (Rev. 20:12-15).

V. EVERY DAY GIVE A HELPING HAND TO OTHERS.

- A. Encourage the downtrodden, the world is full of them.
- B. Exhort the wayward. (Gal. 6:1; James 5:19-20)
- C. Comfort the sorrowful. (Romans 12:15)
- D. Support the weak (Romans 12:1)
- E. Teach the faithless.
- F. Feed the hungry (needy) (James 2).
- G. Say a kind word to the discouraged.

CONCLUSION

In this lesson, we have tried to point out that religion is an everyday proposition.

ATTITUDE IN PRAYER

Daniel F. Cates

A book which I recently purchased contained a chapter about prayer. The chapter dealt with the idea that many view God as a vending machine. In other words they feel that if they ask something of God that He will grant it. The chapter contains a story about a boy who asked in his prayer for a million dollars to be placed under his bed. The prayer of course was not answered. The prayer of that child as well as the prayers of many others are based upon wrong motives, the attitude that we should get something from God.

That is not to say that we cannot ask for things in prayer, in fact Matthew 7:8 shows that if one is to receive he must first ask. The Bible teaches that certainly the prayers of a righteous man do avail much (James 5:16). If the prayer of a righteous man avails much, then that means that we must have a proper relationship with God if we wish for Him to answer our prayers.

What about the prayers of the greedy man, or the prayers of the proud man, or of the attention seeking man, are they going to avail much? If we wish to be able to call upon God in prayer we must not exhibit any such attitudes. Let us notice a few verses on what our attitude should be in

prayer.

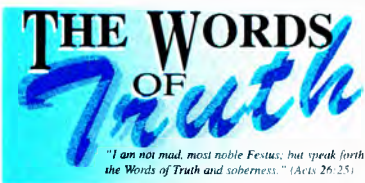
II Chronicles 7:14 reads, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

Jeremiah 29:13 teaches, "And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." Christ taught in Mark 11:24, "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Finally note what is taught in I John 5:14, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us."

Isn't it a comforting thought to know that we have a God who will answer prayers? Isn't it a great duty which we have as Christians to live in a way, and to have such an attitude that God will hear our prayers and answer them? Let us not consider God as some kind of vending machine, or as a "Santa Claus" figure, but rather let us think of Him as One who will give to His children which ask of Him exactly that which they need.

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

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Vol. 35 No. 37

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SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

DOES TELEVISION RULE YOUR HOME?
Y'ALL COME
RULES FOR HAPPY LIVING CHOICES
THE DIFFICULT COMMAND

DOES TELEVISION RULE YOUR HOME?

Barry Grider

Christianity is about the transformation of a person's life (Rom. 12:1,2). Where the world once ruled in one's life, Christ now reigns supremely on the throne of his heart. This changed individual has the most holy desire of "bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:5). Because of this relationship to Christ, faithful parents are very interested in who or what influences their children. This is to be commended. However, there is a tool that exerts a tremendous influence for evil and is often a welcome member of our homes. In fact, it seems we pay such homage to this "god" we grant to it special privileges we would not give to others. I am speaking of the television.

While Christian parents would never allow anyone to come into their home and use obscene, vulgar, and even blasphemous language, they often allow the television to express itself in this way. The American Family Association Journal regularly reviews TV programming, and it is a shame at the number of profanities that are frequently used on every episode of the most popular programs.

Again, I do not know of any parents who would allow their children to be exposed to perversion or welcome a homosexual activist to come into their home and teach his/her ungodly lifestyle. Yet, television can bring them in. Some of the most watched television shows such as *Ellen* and *Seinfeld*, are promoters of this perversion. In fact, the lead character on *Ellen*, played by Ellen DeGeneres, is an avowed lesbian, just like the real life *Ellen*. I am thankful these two programs have not been renewed for this coming season. Unfortunately, television will continue to promote the radical homosexual agenda right into our living rooms through other situation comedies, dramas, and "educational" programs.

How many parents would allow strangers to come into their homes dressed provocatively or

even remove their clothes in front of their children? Yet, television is often allowed to "entertain" our kids with such lewdness. Likewise, TV is responsible for introducing our kids to new styles and fads, many which are very immodest. Paul's instructions are still timely and should be applied, "In like manner also, that woman adorn themselves in modest apparel..." (I Tim. 2:9). Young men and women should constantly see this practiced, but they will not see it on many television programs and advertisements where promoters know that nudity sells.

Television can also expose young people to alcohol. Many network programs will display individuals using alcohol as a means of solving their every day problems. Advertisers promote beer by telling our kids "it doesn't get any better than this." Yet, they fail to show the homeless man lying in a back alley, who has spent all of his money buying liquor, or a teenager clinging to life in a hospital because of drunken driving.

Faithful parents teach their young people, to respect the authority of God and the Bible, and to honor Him with a pure life (I Pet. 1:15). Yet, parents show a great inconsistency when their young people remain glued to the revelry of an MTV Beach Party for countless hours, and never utter a word about the sinfulness of such behavior.

Yes, it seems in today's culture that even among many Christian parents, television is a "god." This particular medium could be used for good if parents would simply monitor what their children watch. However, television often becomes the master and is given free reign to manipulate and mold the minds of our impressionable youth. Parents should awake from sleep and take control of their children's viewing habits. If a program does not glorify God, build strong character, or offer good clean entertainment, TURN IT OFF!

FROM THE EDITORS

LEVI SIDES

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Y'ALL COME

Hospitality is commanded. In enumerating the qualities of Christians and the duties of them, Paul mentions the virtue of "given to hospitality" (Romans 12:13). One qualification of bishops or elders is that of being "given to hospitality" (I Timothy 3:2). Peter writes, "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging" (I Peter 4:8-9). Again, the Holy Spirit instructs us to "let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Hebrews 13:1-2).

Jesus used the hospitality of many for his daily care (Matthew 8:20; 9:10; Mark 7:24; 14:3; Luke 7:36; 8:3; 9:52; 10:38; 14:1; 19:5; John 12:2). In sending out the apostles on the limited commission, (Matthew 10:5-15) it is apparent that they would depend upon Jewish hospitality for their subsistence. Also Christian hospitality was especially needed for those apostles and disciples who made long missionary journeys for the cause of Christ. Hospitality was a very strong bond and an expression of unity in the New Testament churches.

Anyone who is old enough to remember what the "good old days" were really like, can recall with vivid clarity what the words, "Y'all come have dinner with us today" meant. You immediately saw visions of good things to eat dancing before your gastronomic eyesight. You saw a table laden with an endless variety of goodies - with prospects for seconds on everything. And even though you knew that you'd have to hang impatiently on the screen door just outside the dining room until "the grown folks" got through eating, there was still something good and pleasant about the sound of those words, "Y'all come have dinner with us today."

You don't hear those words much anymore. And I believe that we are poorer because of it. Of course, there was much more involved in "having people over" than eating a big meal. There was fellowship, love, consideration, good will, and a bunch of other positive factors which are needed in a congregation which is trying to grow up with "one heart and one soul".

Why is it that we do not hear those words much any more? One church member said, "Hospitality! who wants to be hospitable? What with all the robbings, beatings, murders, and assaults. It's just not wise". Another says, "It is just too much trouble to have people in our home! Look at all the house cleaning which would have to be done! It just isn't worth it!" Another said, "It is just too expensive for me". Another church member said, "I'm just too busy!" This is probably the most used excuse for our lack of hospitality. You would think that with all the electronic gadgetry and time-saving devices we have spent our money on of late that we would have plenty of time to do things that are vital and meaningful and to do the "one thing" we have been left here to do.

Don't tell Grandma that you haven't had anyone over at your house for a few years because you have been too busy. She might not understand. She might remind you that her menu of home-baked breads, homegrown beans and corn, lot-fed beef, pen fed hams, nest-gathered eggs, hand-churned butter, hand-cranked ice cream, homemade jellies, and so forth, was not put before her guests in "china" during a lull in her daily activities.

Ah! We could do it if we would just take the time. And I believe we would enjoy it. Have the courage to say to someone: "Y'all come and have dinner at our home today."

RULES FOR HAPPY LIVING

Paul Sain

Do you desire a “*Happy Life?*” Follow these rules and you will enjoy happiness that cannot be found in “things” of this world.

1. Count your blessings, not your troubles.

Though we have problems in this life, we are still blessed. The plaque on the wall stated, “*I grumbled and complained because I had no shoes, until I saw a man who had no feet.*”

2. Live one day at a time. Regardless of what Satan may throw at you, it can be handled “*one day at a time*” (James 4:13-15). You can control and conquer if you will take on the obstacles a day at a time.

3. Learn to say “I Love You” to those near and dear. Break the shackles and learned restraints and express your love and appreciation to as many as possible each day (Mark 14:3-6).

4. Be a giver not a getter. Often if you fail to get out of life what you want, it is because you are expecting to GET instead of GIVE. (Luke 6:38).

5. Seek good in everyone and everything. Be a “good” seeker. Try hard not to be a “*fault finder*”. When faults are present, deal with

them lovingly.

6. Pray every day. Always take time to express to God your appreciation for blessings and ask Him for guidance (Luke 18:1).

7. Do a good deed each day. The “*grandest intention*” is not as good as the “*smallest deed*”. Follow the Lord’s example (Acts 10:38).

8. Watch your priorities. Keep the important things in first place (Matt. 6:33).

9. Fill your life with good. Throw away the “*trash*” from your life and replace it with good thoughts and deeds (Phil. 4:8).

10. Laugh and cry. Laughter is good medicine. A good sense of humor overcomes many “*ills and problems*” of life.

11. Learn to practice the happiness habit. Smile, and the world will smile with you (Phil. 4:4). Make up your mind to “*be happy*”.

12. Let go and let God control your life. To find peace and happiness you must let God completely reign on the throne in your life. You must totally follow His will. It is for your good.

CHOICES

Mike Benson

Whether you realize it or not, you make a number of physical choices when you wake up each morning:

- Whether or not you will get out bed
- What time you will actually get up
- Whether or not you will eat breakfast
- What you will wear during the day
- How you intend to utilize your time.

Likewise, whether you realize it or not, you also make a number of spiritual choices when you wake up each morning:

Whether or not you will obey the Lord
Will you be devoted or half-hearted in your work

Whether you will treat other people with respect

Whether or not ultimately you want to go to Heaven.

In the long ago, Joshua urged, “Choose for yourself...(Josh. 24:15). Dear friends, what choices will you make today?”

THE DIFFICULT COMMAND

Bobby Duncan

If someone should ask you what the most difficult command of God is, what would you say? Would you say it has something to do with loving one's enemy? Or being a liberal giver? Or keeping one's thoughts pure? Perhaps these are difficult. But the most difficult command is the command to repent. Acts 17:30-31 says, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance to all men, in that he raised him from the dead."

J. H. Thayer in his *Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament* says the word translated "repent" means *to change one's mind for the better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins*. He also says the word is "used especially of those who, conscious of their sins and with manifest tokens of sorrow, are intent on obtaining God's pardon." (page 405).

When the Prodigal Son got ready to leave home, he said, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me" (Luke 15:12). When he

was getting ready to return home he had decided to say to his father, "Father...make me as one of thy hired servants." The difference between "give me" and "make me" is what we call repentance. When we lay aside our own selfish desires and turn our lives over to the Lord to make us what he wants us to be, we have repented.

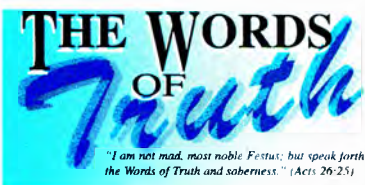
Being baptized for the remission of sins is not at all difficult for the one who has genuinely repented. Neither is loving one's enemy, giving liberally, or keeping oneself pure. That is why we say repentance is the most difficult command; once one has repented, that is, made up his mind to do right, all these things are much easier.

Because Paul genuinely repented he was able to say, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them all but dung, that I may win Christ" (Philippians 3:7-8).

Have you repented? Once you do, then serving the Lord becomes much easier.

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

A STRONG PULPIT
THE CHURCH OF CHRIST
THE INSPIRATION OF THE
SCRIPTURES

Vol. 35 No. 38

September 17, 1998

A STRONG PULPIT

Allen Webster

Somebody said, "Preaching's not what it used to be." Weak preaching has become more and more common place. More attention often is being paid to how something is said rather than what is said. Drawing large crowds is emphasized more than preaching sound doctrine (Tit. 2:1). Preachers in Gospel Meetings are billed as the "main attraction" and audiences are told to "turn around and say 'I love you.'" Preachers tell story after story and joke after joke. Churches promote gimmicks, games, and gymnasiums instead of God, godliness, and Gospel.

Theatrical preachers who stir emotions but leave the mind befuddled, remind one of the false teachers Jude mentioned who spoke great swelling words of vanity but were clouds without water (Jude 12,13). Are some contemporary preachers guilty of doing "their works to be seen of men" (Mt. 23:5)? Peter warned that some "with feigned words make merchandise of you" (2 Pet. 2:3). The word "feigned" (*plastois*, from which we get our word "plastic") describes something artificial and insincere.

Don't forget that Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (Jn. 12:32). Preaching "Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2) is to be the focal point of the message. The preacher is not the "main attraction," Christ is. Emotionalism is not to move sinners, the cross is.

Many people have just never considered how dangerous weak preaching is. Let us consider its effects.

WEAK PREACHING CAUSES A LACK OF GENUINE CONVERSIONS

Since it is the Word that sets men free (Jn. 8:32), preaching without it will cause men to remain in bondage to Satan. A preacher cannot expect to bring men to Christ when he deletes the power from his sermon (Rm. 1:16). It is tragic for lost souls who desperately need to hear the Gospel (Mk. 16:15,16) to leave a meeting or worship feeling good, but not knowing any more about how to be saved than they did before they came.

WEAK PREACHING CAUSES THE FAITH OF CHRISTIANS TO BE WEAKENED

Christians are built up by a steady and strong diet of the Word. "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32; cf. Heb. 5:12-14). If they are not properly fed, will they remain healthy?

WEAK PREACHING LEADS TO CHURCH PROBLEMS

Churches are being torn asunder by false doctrine imaginable. A lack of distinctive preaching has contributed to the success of the devil in causing these problems. We wonder why churches are ready to put women in leadership roles, bring the instrument in the front door, and eat the Lord's Supper on Saturday when we have not heard any sermons on the woman's role, the sin of innovation in worship, and why Christians partake on Sunday (and every Sunday). Sincere people do better when they are taught better. The best preventive for church problems is a strong pulpit (cf. 1 Pet. 5:8).

Continued on Page 3

FROM THE EDITORS

Levi Sides

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THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

The Church of Christ is incomparably great. Why? (1) It was eternally purposed, Eph. 3:10-11. (2) It cost the blood of Christ, Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25. (3) It is the glory of God on earth, Eph. 3:21. (4) It is spirit-filled, Eph. 2:22. (5) It is heaven-bound, I Cor. 15:24-26. This lesson deals with this wonderful institution. Brother Wendell Winker makes an analysis of Matt. 16:16-19 which presents to us a most comprehensive picture of the Lord's church.

(1) "Upon this rock" -- THE FOUNDATION. The rock (Petra, feminine gender) upon which the church was to be built was Peter's (Petros, masculine gender) confession, "Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). Such was a confession of the office ("the Christ," that is, the prophet, priest, and king) and person ("the son of the living God") of Christ. The foundation rock was not Peter. Our Lord did not say, "Thou art Peter, and upon thee, Peter, I will build my church." Paul said, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 3:11). Isaiah prophesied that Christ would be the foundation (Isa. 28:16). Study Matt. 7:24-29.

(2) "I" -- THE BUILDER. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it" (Ps. 127:1). Matt. 15:13 reads, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." The church of Christ was not built by the Lord's harbinger (John the Baptist), by any reformer (Calvin, Luther), by any restorer (Campbell, Stone) or by any modern-day, self-acclaimed prophet (Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, Charles T. Russell, Judge Rutherford).

(3) "Will build" -- THE TIME OF ESTABLISHMENT. The kingdom (church, Matt. 16:18-19; Heb. 12:22-28) was to come with

power (Mark 9:1). The power was to come when the Holy Spirit came (Acts 8:1). The Holy Spirit came on Pentecost day (Acts 2:1-4). The Holy Spirit coming on Pentecost day, the power came on that day; and, since the kingdom was to come when the power came, the kingdom came on Pentecost day. Consequently, passages before Pentecost point toward the church's establishment (Matt. 6:10; 10:7; 16:18; Lk. 10:9; 19:11; 22:18; 23:42; Mk. 15:43; Acts 1:6), and passages after Pentecost point backward to its establishment (Acts 2:47; 8:1; 15:4; Rom. 16:16; I Cor. 1:1; Col. 1:13-14; I Thess. 1:1; Heb. 12:22-28; Rev. 1:9).

(4) "My" -- THE POSSESSOR. The church belongs to the Lord by virtue of purchase (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25). Too, the church belongs to the Lord by virtue of his relationship thereto. He is the church's foundation (I Cor. 3:11), cornerstone (Acts 4:11,12), door (Jn. 10:9), way (Jn. 14:6), light (Jn. 1:7-9; 8:12), head (Eph. 1:22-23), saviour (Eph. 5:23), builder (Matt. 16:18), etc.

(5) "Church" -- THE NUMBER. A text means what it says and says what it means. Now, what does this text say? Did Jesus say, "churches?" No! Did he say "a church?" No! Did he say, "one of many churches?" No! Well, what did he say? "Church" -- singular, that is what he said! Yes, our Lord promised to build one church. The singularity of the church is repetitiously affirmed in the New Testament (Eph. 1:22,23; 4:5; Col. 1:18,24; 3:15; Jn. 10:16; Acts 20:28). Accordingly, the church of Christ is not a church among churches, or a denomination among denominations. Rather, it is the Lord's one and only, singular, church.

Continued on Page 3

A STRONG PULPIT, *continued from Page 1*

WEAK PREACHING CAUSES A LACK OF REAL CHURCH GROWTH

The church is no stronger than the pulpit. One observed that weak preaching has made the church little more "than a soup line for the distribution of loaves and fishes when we should be pointing people to eternal water and eternal food" (Jn. 4:10-14; 6:26-27). Another added, "The liberal denominational churches have generally deleted God's Word from their message over the last forty years. Their faith is dead, their numbers are shrinking. Their missionary forces are drying up, their seminaries are closing. Why should we follow them down the broad road that leads to destruction?"

WEAK PREACHING CAUSES CONFUSION AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS

When "uncertain sounds" (I Cor. 14:7-10) come from the bugle, the army panics. Weak preaching makes weak Christians. Weak Christians walk out of the meeting-house doors unequipped to cope with the god of this world. Many confused

Christians are unprepared to meet the false doctrine of the denominational world and not a few have been swept into it. A Texas preacher wrote, "Preachers need to shake 'em up, wake 'em up, move 'em out, so God's will and way can be clear in an age of foggy, dim, unclear thoughts, doctrines, and ideals."

Paul wrote, "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoid profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called" (I Tim. 6:20); and, "But shun profane, and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness" (2 Tim. 2:16).

The souls of men are at stake. Gospel preaching saves, and without it men cannot be saved. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (I Cor. 1:18). Preachers, let's take heart. God will be with us when we send out His message. And, "what shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rm. 8:31).

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2)

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, *continued from Page 2*

(6) "And the gates of hell (hades) shall not prevail against it" -- THE TEST. Though our Lord was to be crucified and buried, He was to rise from the tomb on the third and appointed morn, bringing life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Tim, 1:10). Accordingly, His soul was not left in Hades nor did His flesh see corruption (Acts 2:27). Thus, on the Lord's day following His death (Mk. 16:9) our Lord's soul (spirit) came from the hadean world, rejoined his body, and the resurrection obtained. Correspondingly, the test was met and the church could become a reality (Eph. 1:20-23).

(7) "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" -- THE AUTHORITY. The Holy Spirit came upon the apostles on Pentecost day in fulfillment of Jn. 14:26; 16:13, enabling them to unerringly issue the terms of entrance into the kingdom (Acts 2:37-41). Upon that day, with these said keys, the doors of the church were opened to never be closed until the Lord comes. By their inspired proclamation of the revelation of God's will they bound and loosed. Back then the inspired word was in the inspired man. Now the inspired word is in the inspired book. Thus, the scriptures become the objective standard of authority in religion (2 Tim. 3:16,17; Jude 3).

THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

Kenneth L. Jones

Paul declared that the Scriptures are inspired of God, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God..." (II Timothy 3:16). Most people agree that the Bible is inspired, but there are a number of concepts as to how.

The modernist says that the Bible is inspired in the same way an artist is motivated to create a masterpiece, or a writer to compose poetry. He denies any divine or supernatural influence to move or guide. He says that emotions and creativity are aroused through purely human faculties. He contends that the morals and principles of the New Testament were good for those times in which they were written, but that men are free to choose and adapt to modern standards of behavior and religious practice. To them moral and religious conduct are for each individual to decide for himself. This concept denies that the Bible is inspired of God.

The liberal advocates a thought inspiration for the Scriptures. He teaches that God gave the thought but left the words for each writer to select for himself. In this case, of course, the Bible would be subject to human errors and also to the private interpretation of the writer. Peter denied this concept of inspiration in II Peter 2:20-21. He said, "that no prophecy of the Scripture is of private interpretation but that men spoke from God

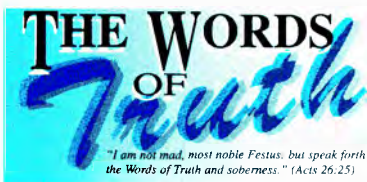
being moved by the Holy Spirit". Liberals also agree with the modernist that the Bible consists of broad principles and maxims which every individual is free to interpret for himself. Practically all, with perhaps one or two exceptions, of the modern translations of the Bible are based on this concept of inspiration. This kind of translation is called *free translation*. The translators are free to interpret in their own words what they feel the writer intended to say. In such translations we have only a commentary on the Scriptures.

The Scriptures themselves assert a *verbal or plenary* inspiration. The word translated "inspired" in II Timothy 3:16 is THEOPNEUSTOS and means literally, "God-breathed." In the Old Testament (II Samuel 23:2), David said that the Spirit of the Lord spoke through him and put the "words" in his tongue. Paul affirmed that he and other inspired men of the first century spoke "words" that the Holy Spirit taught (I Corinthians 2:3).

How thankful we are that in the Bible we have the words of God, not men. We are not dependent on human weakness of understanding and expression. We should insist on a literal, word for word, translation and relegate all free translations and paraphrases to the status of commentaries containing the interpretations of men.

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Vol. 35 No. 37

September 24, 1998

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

**MARRIAGE - THE GREATEST
HUMAN CONTRACT
MINISTERS OF MISINFORMATION
"LORD, PLEASE DON'T BE
NEGATIVE"
THINGS THAT NEVER CHANGE
BLESSINGS IN CHRIST**

MARRIAGE - THE GREATEST HUMAN CONTRACT

Mark N. Posey

The Home is the backbone of our society. Marriage is the most basic and influential unit in the world. It is vitally necessary to emphasize the importance of marriage because each year in the United States there are more than half as many divorces as marriages. A recent statistic caught my attention: 1 of 3 marriages end in divorce - 1 of 50 marriages (where the ceremony is in a church building) end in divorce - 1 of 1105 marriages (who follow the Bible) end in divorce. The Biblical pattern for marriage and the home WORKS! Therefore, consider what the Bible has to say about a Christian marriage:

1) THE NATURE OF MARRIAGE. First, marriage is between a male and female. Genesis 1:27 clearly states that God created "male and female." The homosexual lifestyle is a deadly force against marriage. Second, marriage involves sexual union. God called this union the "one flesh" relationship. The "one flesh" relationship must be saved for marriage and kept within marriage. Pre-marital sex and extra-marital sex are violations of God's law (Hebrews 13:4). Third, marriage involves a covenant before God. Malachi 2:14 says, "Yet ye say, wherefore? Because the Lord has been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant." God is the witness of all weddings whether invited or not.

2) THE DURATION OF MARRIAGE. First, marriage is a lifelong commitment. The time-honored words of Jesus express God's desire for longevity in the marriage relationship: "What therefore God had joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:4). Second, marriage is not eternal, but is to last "until death do they part".

Notice Jesus' words in Matthew 22:30, "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven."

3) THE NUMBER OF PARTIES IN A MARRIAGE. Marriage is monogamous. It is for one man and one woman for life. Notice Romans 7:2, "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth." However, the Bible speaks strongly against polygamy in both the Old and New Testaments. Monogamy was taught by precedent (God gave Adam only one wife - this set the precedent for the whole human race), precept (Deut. 17:17, "neither shall he multiply wives for himself."), moral prescription against adultery (Exod. 20:17, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife."), population proportion (Roughly equal numbers of males and females are born.) and punishment (Every polygamist in the OT paid for his sin (e.g. Solomon - 1 Kings 11:4). The fact that God permitted polygamy no more proves He prescribed it than permitting divorce indicates He desired it.

4) THE BLESSINGS OF MARRIAGE. First, a GOOD HUSBAND. Men who treat women like ladies; love and respect them. Men who are not afraid or ashamed of who they are and their God-given right to take the lead. Ephesians 5:25, "Husbands love your wives." Second, a GOOD WIFE. The grandest creation of God was woman. Women grace our world with beauty, tenderness, love and kindness. The greatest in marriage is a loving wife. Ephesians 5:22, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands." Third, GOOD CHILDREN. Read Psalm 127:3-5.

FROM THE EDITORS

Glenn A. Posey

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MINISTERS OF MISINFORMATION

There are preachers, evangelists, ministers, or pastors as they are called in the denominational groups. There are pulpit ministers, youth ministers, educational ministers, involvement ministers, senior saints ministers, ministers of counseling, etc. Whatever they are called, they are ministers of information. The world has always had them, and always will. Everyone knows what you are talking about when you mention "minister." But I'm talking about the man who stands in the pulpit of the churches, and tells people what he thinks the Bible means. This is the man of this lesson.

The misinformed will misinform. Paul said, "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13). Jesus warned, "If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15:14). The commission of the Great Commission is, "preach the gospel" (Matt. 28:19; Mk. 16:15). The pure, unadulterated gospel is "God's power unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). The curse of God rests upon any man that would change God's will in the least (Gal. 1:6-9). Peter pointed out that those that are "unlearned and unstable wrest as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own

destruction" (2 Peter 3:16). Whether it is distort or pervert, the end result is the same, destruction. The misinformed will misinform. Why? Because they have "changed the truth of God into a lie" (Romans 1:25).

The misinformed will follow. Paul said, "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" (2 Thess. 2:11). To the misinformed follower, error is made to seem right. Solomon said, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12). By "good words and fair speeches" the misinformed can deceive the hearts of the multitudes. Surely our nation's air, water, etc, need cleaning up, but a far more serious area needs our attention. The pulpit's across this old world need cleaning up.

Every minister is reminded of Paul's statement, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:3,4). Preachers, "Preach the word", nothing else. Don't ever be a "minister of misinformation."

"LORD, PLEASE DON'T BE NEGATIVE"

Gary Colley

The Lord Jesus Christ is the pattern or example in all spiritual matters. There are some, however, who seem to give the Lord this place only in lip service when it comes to preaching. They are so "positive" the words "no," "except," and "not" are evidently not part of their vocabularies, that is, unless it is a negative word and attitude toward those who preach the Truth and expose error. This idea has critically infected some, paralyzed others, and weakened "nigh unto death" many congregations. The balanced preaching of Jesus, Paul, and Peter is traded for the "positive" preaching of Peale.

The Sermon on the Mount preached by Jesus has both positive and negative teaching. Our "positive" friends, however, would probably inform Jesus (if He thus preached in their presence) that He made a large mistake with His "negative and narrow" preaching. They might further instruct Him that the church surely would not grow if He didn't stop being so "negative."

Can you believe the Lord said:

1. "If ye forgive not... neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Mat. 6:15).
2. "Be not as the hypocrites" (v. 16).
3. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth" (v. 17).
4. "No man can serve two masters...Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (v. 24).
5. "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Mat. 7:1).
6. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs" (v. 6).
7. "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat" (v. 13).
8. "Beware of false prophets" (v. 15).
9. "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven" (v. 21).

What would be the response to such preaching today? Perhaps it would be, "Lord, please don't ever be negative. We all know the church won't grow with that type of preaching. And please, don't suggest that I read again 2 Timothy 4:1-4!"

THINGS THAT NEVER CHANGE

Johnny Ramsey

Nostalgia is based upon memories that bring to mind things of the past that are dear to us. We may not recall with accuracy all the details but we find joy in moments of yesterday that take us back to home and hearth. We might even change a few of the scenarios to fit our idealism and secret wishes for a better ending than the one that really transpired. However, these are some things that never change and we need to be grateful for such immutable matters. They are:

- God's gracious love
- The high cost of sin
- The hope of heaven
- The integrity of the Bible

These points show the balance, challenge and heart of Christianity in the battles of life as we strive to maintain purity and contentment while in a carnal world of shameful licentiousness.

- I often wonder what I shall own
- In that other world to which I go

What shall they hear and what shall they see
In the soul that answers the call for me
Will the great Judge commend
When my task is through
Shall my spirit have gained some riches,
too?

Titus 2:11 informs us that God's grace has appeared to all. Sadly, though, many fail to respond properly to such majestic mercy and infinite love. Some just will not come to the fount of blessing and redemption for cleansing and peace. Romans 10:21, nonetheless informs us that Jehovah still extends outstretched arms to grant shelter to those wise enough to seek His provision.

There is a place of comfort sweet
Near to the heart of God
A place where we our Savior meet
Near to the heart of God...

BLESSINGS IN CHRIST

Vance Hutton

There are many spiritual blessings in Christ. In fact, there are not any spiritual blessings outside of Christ (Eph. 1:3). Are you in Christ that these blessings can be yours? Two New Testament passages tell us how to get into Christ. Both speak of being baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). A man in Christ is one who hears the gospel message, believes it, repents of his sinfulness, confesses his faith in Christ, and is baptized into Christ to rid him of His sins and to then become a part of the body or Church of the Lord. As a Christian, are you abiding in Christ (Jn. 15:1-6) that you might continue to claim these great blessings found only in Christ that are recorded in John 8. These are light, liberty, and life.

I) LIGHT OFFERED THROUGH CHRIST: John 8:12 reads "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." God and Christ are light just as they are love (I Jn. 4:8). There is no darkness at all in Deity (I Jn. 1:5). Such is His very nature and the essence of His Being. He is the essence of holiness, truth, and glory. He is the very opposite of all that darkness represents. The Lord then offers us the blessing of walking in light. Light is so valuable to us in a physical sense but think of the blessing of the spiritual direction in Christ. We have been brought out of darkness (Col. 1:13) and into light (Acts 26:18) and have light for our path (Ps. 119:105; I Jn. 1:7). Let us all walk as children of light (Eph. 5:8) and as the day (I Thess. 5:5).

May we be the light of the world (Matt. 5:14). Only as we walk and abide in Christ can we enjoy this light and be a light for others.

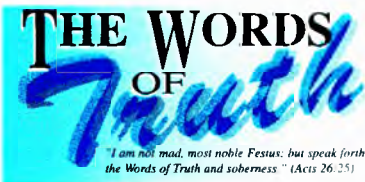
II) LIBERTY OFFERED THROUGH CHRIST: John 8:31-32 reads "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." There is freedom indeed in Christ (Jn. 8:36). There is true liberty in Christ (Gal. 5:1). Think of the blessing of being freed from that which enslaved us and held us guilty and would eventually doom us to be lost forever. The Lord is just and justice demands that the penalty for sin be paid. The Lord offers liberty from every evil thought, word, or deed you have ever committed and for the things left unthought, unsaid, and undone that should have been. This is the greatest liberty.

III) LIFE OFFERED THROUGH CHRIST: John 8:51 reads "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." Jesus came that we might have life (Jn. 10:10). The Lord gives eternal life to his sheep if they will keep listening and obeying Him as their Shepherd (Jn. 10:27-29). This is the record that God has given to us eternal life through His Son (I Jn. 5:11). The person who has the Son has life (I Jn. 5:12). This life is eternal made possible by Christ (Jn. 11:25-26).

Light, liberty, and life are just part of the blessings in Christ. If these were all they were, they would be plenty to motivate us to live for Him who died for us.

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC
ARE YOU DRIFTING WITH THE
TIDE?
WE WILL SAVE SOME...

Vol. 35 No. 38

October 1, 1998

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Ray Hawk

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19).

Why do churches of Christ not use mechanical instruments of music in worship to God?

Anything Goes?

Most people look upon the question of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God as a hair splitting issue. The reason for this is a failure upon their part to either appreciate the word of God as His standard of instruction, or to fail to understand how the Lord's word authorizes.

Most people have the interpretation that unless the Bible specially forbids an action, it is alright to participate in it. One church recently decided it was right to substitute hamburgers and french fries for unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine in the communion. A decade ago, one church used marijuana smoking as part of their worship to get "closer to God." Since the Bible does not specifically condemn these actions, this interpretation must allow these deeds as scriptural. Actually, nothing would be sinful in worship to God as long as the Bible did not specifically condemn it, if this interpretation is correct.

What Is Authorized?

Churches of Christ believe one must have authority for an action before it is right. Just because an action is not mentioned by name and condemned, does not mean it is a right action. For example, when Noah was told by Jehovah to "Make thee an ark of gopher wood" (Genesis 6:14), God did not have to specify all other kinds

of wood for Noah to know they were not authorized. When Jehovah specified gopher wood, that eliminated all other kinds of wood. If Noah had used oak or pine, he would not have been doing what the Lord commanded him. One preacher, in the 1960s, made fun of this view and wrote that Noah made the ark out of gopher wood, but had a lifeboat made out of pine. Many have ridiculed this argumentation, but they cannot answer it.

In Ephesians 5:19, God authorized the kind of music and the kind of instrument he wants in worship to him. He stated, "singing" and "making melody in the heart." He did not say sing and play upon a mechanical instrument of music. He said, sing and make melody in the heart. The instrument every Christian carries with him is his heart. A Christian may sing and make melody with that instrument, whether he is assembled with other Christians or alone (Colossians 3:16; James 5:13).

Instrument Commanded

Several years ago, a preacher argued that the mechanical instrument is commanded. If God commanded every Christian to sing and make melody upon a mechanical instrument of music, each one who sang would have to play an instrument. That would demand that every Christian must learn how to play a mechanical instrument of some kind. Actually, the instrument found in these passages is one that every Christian has with him and can play. It is the heart. God commands the heart to be played upon. This is in harmony with his command to worship him "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23,24).

Continued on Page 4

FROM THE EDITORS

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ARE YOU DRIFTING WITH THE TIDE?

INTRODUCTION

1. Heb. 2:1-4 (R.V.) says, "Lest haply we should drift away from them."
2. "A dead fish can't drift up stream" Illustrate.
3. The way to heaven is up stream (Matt. 7:13-14).
"For straight is the gate, and narrow is the way that leads to heaven, and there be few that find it"
"For wide is the gate and broad is the way which leadeth to destruction, and many enter in thereat."
4. Drifting is to follow our own inclinations (Rom. 8:13; Matt. 24:12,13; Gal. 5:7).
5. How may one know he is drifting with the tide?

DISCUSSION

1. When you begin to neglect regular assembly, you're drifting.
 - A. Heb. 10:25. When you become a "Oncer".
 - B. God has commanded His children to assemble on the first day of every week.
2. When you begin losing interest in the Word of God, you're drifting.
 - A. I Peter 2:2 "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk."
 - B. Matthew 4:4; Hebrews 6:4-6.
3. If doing less and less for the Lord and His church, you're drifting.
 - A. I Corinthians 15:58 "Abound in the work of the Lord."
4. If giving less percentage than in the past, you're drifting.
 - A. I Cor. 16:2, "Give as you have been prospered."
 - B. 2 Cor. 8:1-5; Prov. 3:9,10.
5. If ceasing to pray or losing interest in praying, you're drifting.
 - A. James 5:16; "Pray one for the other."
 - B. Matthew 7:11; Heb. 5:7; I Thess. 5:17.
6. If you are becoming satisfied with your achievements, you're drifting.
 - A. Matthew 5:6 "Hungry and thirsty after righteousness".
 - B. Revelation 3:10-14; Hebrews 6:1-3.
7. If you are losing your interest in saving souls, you're drifting.
 - A. Prov. 11:30, "He that winneth souls is wise."
 - B. I Corinthians 9:21-23; I Tim. 4:16; James 5:19-21.
8. If you are becoming more and more worldly, you're drifting.
 - A. Romans 12:1-2 "Be not conformed to this world, be transformed."
 - B. James 1:27; Titus 2:11-12; James 4:4.
9. If you have an increasing interest in money-worldly possessions, you're drifting.
 - A. Colossians 3:1-3 "Risen with Christ, set affections on above."
 - B. Luke 8:14; I Tim. 6:5,9; Matt. 6:119-21; Heb. 13:5,6; Prov. 23:7.
10. If you are becoming more and more interested in worldly pleasures, you're drifting.
 - A. He. 11:24-27; "Moses chose, suffer, than enjoy pleasures of sin."
 - B. Luke 8:14; 2 Timothy 3:4.
11. If you are losing the joy of salvation, you're drifting.
 - A. Psalms 51:10-12, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation."
 - B. I Peter 1:7,8; Philippians 4:4.
12. If you are losing confidence in God's providential protection and care, you're drifting.
 - A. I Peter 5:7, "Cast your cares upon Jesus."
 - B. Matt. 6:33; Prov. 3:25.
13. If there is in you an ever increasing discontent with the church; its preacher, elders, deacons, and members etc., you're drifting.
 - A. James 4:11 "Speak not evil one of another, brethren."
 - B. Matt. 7:1-3, Ever present danger of becoming a mote hunter.
14. If you are beginning to lose your first love for the church and its work, you're drifting.
 - A. Rev. 2:1-5, "Ephesus had lost its first love."
 - B. Our love for Christ and His church should grow every day.
15. If you are beginning to offer excuses for not attending all the services of the church and for not doing your duty, you're drifting.
 - A. Luke 14:15-24, "And they all began to make excuses."
 - B. He. 2:3; Jas. 4:17, "Such as weather too hot-cold."
 - C. "Company came:--"Clothes not good enough"-- "Relatives sick." "Too many hypocrites in the church."
16. If you are losing your enthusiasm and becoming lukewarm, you're drifting.
 - A. Rev. 3:14-19, "Laodicia was lukewarm."
 - B. Indifference and lukewarmness go together.

CONCLUSION

Drifting is so dangerous because it happens so gradually. Step by step, inch by inch people drift away from God and doing what is right.

WE WILL SAVE SOME...

Charles Box

Possibly no Christian has had a greater desire to save the lost than Paul, the apostle. Paul would give up everything and become anything, within the realm of right, to save some. "For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." (I Cor. 9:19-22.) Nothing should cut our hearts deeper or stir our spirits more than a world lost in sin. The goal of each Christian should be to develop the spirit of Paul, the spirit that is willing to do what it takes to win some.

WE WILL WIN SOME WHEN WE HAVE BEEN TRULY CONVERTED OURSELVES. Jesus must come first in our lives. "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." (Lk. 14:26.) Putting it simply, we must forsake all to follow Christ in order that we might win some. "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple." (Lk. 14:33.) Jesus is not trying to attract large crowds, He wants disciples. Those who are truly His disciples will win some.

WE WILL WIN SOME WHEN WE UNDERSTAND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH. "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen." (Mt. 28:18-20.) The goal or mission of the church is to "make disciples." A disciple is one who imitates his or her teacher." (Lk. 6:40.) Disciples are expected to bear fruit. "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples." (Jn. 15:8.) A failure to bear fruit will cause one to be cut off and taken away. "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away, and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit." (Jn. 15:1-2.)

WE WILL WIN SOME WHEN WE BECOME INTERESTED IN PEOPLE. The church is saved people who are in the people saving business. When Jesus saw lost people it broke His heart. "But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." (Mt. 9:36-38.) Paul shared that concern and interest for lost souls. His heart broke over the lost. "I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to

the flesh." (Rom. 9:1-3.) His desire was strong to see Israel saved. "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved." (Rom. 10:1.) His love for the lost led to salvation regardless of the personal cost. "To the weak I became the weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." (I Cor. 9:22.)

WE WILL WIN SOME WHEN WE REALIZE SOUL-WINNING IS THE BUSINESS OF EVERY CHRISTIAN. The soul winner is described in Proverbs 11:30. "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who wins souls is wise." The soul winner bears fruit. Those who are fruitless will be cut off. "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit." (Jn. 15:2.) You can be a soul-winner. Those who turn souls to righteousness are bright and shining for God. "Those who are wise shall shine Like the brightness of the firmament, And those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever." (Dan. 12:3.) You can be involved in the greatest work in the world. "And He said to them, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mk. 16:15-16.)

WE WILL WIN SOME WHEN WE TRULY FACE THE FACT THAT MANY WE KNOW ARE LOST. Most are traveling the broad way to destruction. "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." (Mt. 7:13-14.) What are you doing to reach the lost? Are you praying specific prayers for some lost person, by name? Do you pray for and share your faith with close friends and unsaved family members. Never forget that all who are outside of Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world." (Eph. 2:12.)

WE WILL WIN SOME WHEN WE SET ASIDE TIME FOR SOUL-WINNING. Souls are not won by accident. There is no greater way to redeem the time than to redeem it through soul-winning. "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." (Eph. 5:16.) One of the reasons we are not winning more souls is that we fail to take time to talk to people, face to face, and heart to heart about Jesus. Winning souls is the most important thing we can be doing. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." (Rom. 1:16.)

May God help us save some while we have opportunity. Let us teach people how to get into Christ and to live in Him. Let us show people the importance of hearing the gospel (Rom. 10:17), believing in Jesus (Heb. 11:6), repenting of our sins (Lk. 13:3), confessing Jesus as Lord (Mt. 10:32), and being baptized into Christ (Acts 22:16.) Great emphasis must also be given to Christian growth. "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen. (2 Pet. 3:18.) Are you a soul-winner? God wants you to be!

Instruments In Heaven

Some have argued that Revelations 5:8; 14:2; 15:2; and 18:22 mention harps in heaven. Since they are in heaven, it is argued, God approves of mechanical instruments of music in the church on earth.

Revelation does mention harps and harpers in heaven. Does that authorize mechanical instruments of music in the church on earth? If it does, then we must also include other things, found in heaven, in the worship of the church upon earth. How many would want to include incense as part of their worship (Revelation 8:3)? Would one want beasts in the worship services (Revelation 4:6)? Wouldn't we have to have 24 elders (Revelation 4:4)?

Revelation is a symbolic book, borrowing from the symbols of the Old Testament so Christians could know what the book was speaking of. The figurative use of harps and harpers in no way authorizes mechanical instruments of music in the church on earth.

The History Of Mechanical Instruments

Although the Jews were a music loving people

(Psalm 150), history shows that mechanical instruments of music were not used in the first century church. Mechanical instruments of music were all around the early church, but it did not use them. In fact, it was not until 607 that Pope Vitalian introduced the organ into the Roman Catholic Church. The use of mechanical instruments comes from the Catholic Church, not the New Testament. First century Christians did not use them.

Scripture

"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them" (Acts 16:25).

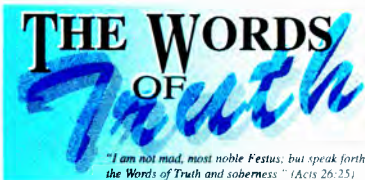
"And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name" (Romans 15:9).

"What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also" (1 Corinthians 14:15).

"Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee" (Hebrews 2:12).

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

**SUDDEN DEATH
THERE CAME ONE RUNNING
"I WANT TO BE A PROMISE
KEEPER"
MAKE UP YOUR MIND
PROPER NOURISHMENT**

Vol. 35 No. 39

October 8, 1998

SUDDEN DEATH

Johnny Ramsey

In championship football games there can be what is called "sudden death overtime" to decide the victor. The Bible often speaks of the brevity and brittle nature of life and the abruptness of death (Proverbs 27:1 and Psalms 89:47). Truly, we dare not boast of tomorrow or brag about length of days upon this transient earth. Our life is only a vapor (James 4:14) and we are, at best, only a step away from eternity (I Samuel 20:3).

Recently our family came face to face with this reality when careless drivers smashed into a van wherein seven of our loved ones were riding. Three people died almost instantly in the collision, including two very near and dear to us. What a blessing they both were in the Lord (Revelation 14:13). We are still concerned about the welfare and health of the survivors, but we have been blessed due to the fact that any lived through the impact of such an accident. God has been good to us, and brethren have rallied to our needs in a gracious way.

There are so many lessons one can learn in such hours of loss. The reality of how comforting the Bible is and how helpful Christianity can be in times of crisis thrill our soul. Passages we have used to comfort others now warm our own hearts and give us peace as never before. The love of brethren with genuine hospitality and tears and letters of empathy grant us strength and consolation in dark hours of loneliness. The power, richness and depth of the church of our Lord comes shining through when hearts are broken and

hope grows dim. Earthly pomp and fame wanes and the joy of heaven with vibrant anticipation of one day seeing loved ones "gone on before" gives us incentive to press on to the hilltops of glory. Jerry Oliver wrote these challenging words:

I know not when the hour may be
The Boatman's call shall come to me;
But, when it does and I am gone,
Weep not for I shall still live on
Where peace and joy and love
abound
And endless fellowship is found.

On that other shore, where the redeemed of all ages bask in the sunlight of God's eternal love, there will be grand reunion and unspeakable grace.

Somewhere the sun is shining,
Somewhere the songbirds dwell;
Hush then, thy sad repining,
God knows--and all is well.

We are not here to live forever. It is not how long we live but how well we live that counts. Jesus tasted of death for every one of us (Hebrews 2:9) and gained victory for us over the grave (I Corinthians 15:57), and that means a triumphant future for every faithful soldier of the cross (II Corinthians 2:14). Sudden death can truly be a certain victory for the saints of God!

FROM THE EDITORS

Levi Sides

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THERE CAME ONE RUNNING

Three of the most sought after things in life are youth, wealth, and power. In His public ministry, Jesus was confronted with a person who actually possessed all three at once (Matthew 19:16-22).

The story of the rich young ruler has always been one of my favorites. It has a constant sense of freshness and reality. It speaks with directness and authority.

This story begins with great promise, for Jesus did not make the first approach, but the young man came running. Surely nothing but good can come from an encounter with Jesus when a man takes the initiative. We have the feeling that he is serious in quest and he has a high respect for the integrity of our Lord. He seems certain that Jesus can give him the answer to his question. This is the kind of situation that preachers hope for and it must have pleased Jesus. Here was the kind of young man the story says that Jesus loved. Everything is promising.

Yet in spite of this good beginning, the story comes to a tragic ending. When the conditions are placed before him, the young man cannot accept them. When he hears the answer, it involves too much. The end of the story says, "But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions" (Matthew 19:22). What started off with such promise ends with such great disappointment.

However, this incident has within it important insights for us. It presents lessons both commendable and uncommendable for us today.

This young man came to Jesus at the

right time of life -- in his youth. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them" (Ecclesiastes 12:1). What a precious and beautiful thing is youth. Youth is like the gardens of the palace of Versailles, like virgin forest on the high waterbeds of Monarch Pass, like sunrise on the ocean, or like flowery fields blowing in the winds, and the fragrance of fresh rains.

He came to the Right Person -- Jesus Christ. Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life:", and "no man cometh unto the Father, but by him" (John 14:6).

The Ruler came with the Right Attitude. He came reverently bowing and worshipping Jesus (Mark 10:18).

He came with the Right Question: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" This is the only question of value.

He received the Right Answer. Jesus said, "...if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:17).

This young man made the Wrong Choice. He responded wrongfully, "He went away sorrowfully" (Matthew 19:22). The saddest words of tongue or pen are: "It might have been." He might have been a great disciple, preacher, missionary for Jesus. He could have had the peace, security, and salvation that Jesus offers, but he chose not to go the way of Jesus. What a wrong choice!

Are you willing to follow him in his example of good qualities? Do not, like him, make the wrong choice and go away sorrowful.

“ I WANT TO BE A PROMISE KEEPER ”

Neal Pollard

How sad that a potentially marvelous program is under the sway of the wicked one (cf. I John 5:19). Promise Keepers, the organization, seeks to motivate men to become better fathers while filling their hearts with soul-condemning religious error. The result may be happier--and in many respects better--families who nonetheless are unprepared for eternity. But, oh that more congregations, under the banner of truth, would encourage the fathers among them to better do the job God has given them (cf. 1 Timothy 5:8; Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21)! Is the situation any better for a father who knows perfectly well the way of truth and fails to walk in it?

When Carl was born, I went before the throne of God in the same manner and with the same matters I did when Gary and Dale were born. I came with vows and determination. I came before God in prayer, mindful of David's inspired words, "Who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?...He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not" (Psalm 15:1,4). Fatherhood is a serious responsibility. A man who becomes a father becomes a guardian of a precious, eternal soul. What my sons become as men I have direct influence upon, as Solomon teaches in Proverbs 22:6. I have made promises to God about my boys.

I promised God that I would strive to impress upon them my love for their mother. Obviously that means that they will never have to deal with the pain of seeing their parents divorce. God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16). In our family, divorce cannot be an option. I have pledged to keep the vows I made to God and my wife to keep myself only for her until death do us part (cf. Hebrews 13:4; Romans 7:1-4), and that vow becomes even more critical in view of three boys who are watching their dad. Furthermore, they need to see my respect for their mother's ideas, values, dreams, and plans. I will honor her, never humiliating her. It means that I will attempt to avoid arguing with my wife before their precious eyes and ears. It means that they will understand that, as deeply and truly as I love them, my love for their mom is still one notch above my love for them. Such a knowledge will give them greater security in the family designed by God and will enhance the quality of their lives at home. It will also teach them how they should treat the young women they will one day wed. I want to keep this promise I made to God.

I promised God that I would work to influence them to become Christians. I pledged to prejudice my boys--in favor of the Lord and against the devil (cf. James 4:6-7). I realize that the best way for me to teach them of the need to be a Christian is to live the best Christian life that I can in front of them. The language I use (Titus 2:8), the things I do (1 Timothy 4:12), what I put first (Matthew 6:33), my faithfulness to attend the services of and work among the church (Hebrews 10:24-25; Ecclesiastes 9:10), and my attitude toward other Christians (Romans 12:10) are all marks I am making in the ledgers of their minds. By the time they leave home, I want to have seen each of my boys become God's children. I want to know that, as they become independent and responsible for themselves, they are right with their Lord. I will do all that I can to see that happen. I have promised God.

I promised God that I would try to raise them in a healthy manner. I want them to grow like Jesus did, increasing "in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" (Luke 2:52). I want their upbringing to be healthy and normal, allowing them to do "boy things," asking me those critical questions (to which I PRAY I can give the right answers!!), and participating in activities which sharpen their social, intellectual, physical, and spiritual skills. I want them to remember home as a happy, healthy place--a haven in an often horrible world. I made that promise to God!

Dare I think that I can slip by Christ at the judgment, having flippantly frittered away these crucial years in my boys' lives? I am the head of my house (Ephesians 5:23; Ephesians 6:1-2). I dare not lay entirely upon my wife the commands God has given primarily to me--teaching them God's word, leading them to obey the Lord, and growing more and more like Christ each day. I have given God my word. How could I do otherwise? These children will spend an eternity somewhere.

Dads, how about you? What have you promised God about your children? Do you dare do your job nonchalantly, passively, and carelessly, without prayer and effort? If so, how do you face the mirror every morning? How do you face the judgment? BE A PROMISE KEEPER! Vow to God that you will be a dad which pleases Him, and keep your word!!

MAKE UP YOUR MIND

David Sain

Recently, I read about an author who sent Abraham Lincoln a manuscript to examine. After President Lincoln had read it, the author asked, "What do you think?" And, Mr. Lincoln is reported to have said, "Well, for people who like that kind of thing, I think it is just the kind of thing they would like.

One politician was asked to clarify his response to a reporter's question, and he said, "Well, to the best of my knowledge, I'm not sure."

Hmmmm! Sounds like certain preachers when they are

asked to state their positions on controversial issues.

It also reminds me of the man who was asked about a controversial matter, and he said, "Well, I have friends on both sides of that issue and I try to stick with my friends."

The moral of all of this is: know what you believe and be a man! Stand up for what you know to be right!

"...stand firm in the faith; act like men..." (1 Cor. 16:13 NASV).

PROPER NOURISHMENT

Mike Benson

It is my understanding that certain creatures can go rather extended periods of time without food. For example: a bird can go nine days without food,

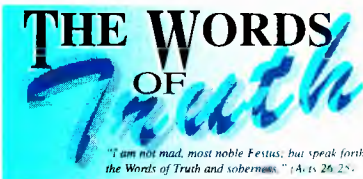
a dog - 20 days
a turtle - 500 days
a snake - 800 days
a fish - 1,000 days
and some species of insects -12,000 days.

However, sooner or later all of these creatures need to eat. The same can also be said of a man-- he requires sustenance, but he needs more than just physical nourishment; he also needs *spiritual*. In the long ago, Job said, "...I have treasured the words of His (God's) mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12b).

Dear Friend, we all need food for the body, but more importantly, we all need food for the soul (cf. Jn. 6:27ff). *Are you getting the proper nourishment (cf. Mt. 5:6)?* Think about it...

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)*

Vol. 35 No. 39

October 15, 1998

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

**DO WE DISAPPOINT JESUS?
THEY HAD BEEN WITH JESUS,
Part 1
STEPHANAS, THE ADDICT**

DO WE DISAPPOINT JESUS?

Johnny Ramsey

In Zechariah, chapter nine, the triumphal entry of the Messiah into Jerusalem was predicted five centuries prior to its fulfillment in Luke 19. When we also study the parallel accounts of this climactic event in Matthew and Mark we learn many powerful truths that put the spotlight upon the sovereignty of God and the fickle nature of man. We learn from Mark 11:9 that the Savior could not be compromised by the applause of the masses or deterred from His task of spiritual redemption by the shallow concepts of the crowd that yearned for an earthly potentate who would deliver them from Roman rule and give them prowess in governmental realms. The Jews arrogantly failed to see the need for deliverance from sin by a Redeemer who came out of Zion (Isaiah 59:20). They wanted someone like Judas Maccabees to be their political hero!

In Luke 19 and 20 we have vivid portraits of the power and glory of the Man of Galilee and yet the humility and devotion of the Son of God. The greatest One who ever lived would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey--a symbol of peace and meekness--rather than on a prancing white horse or a black stallion that would convey prestige and nobility and tyranny. Truly, Christ was the Prince of peace Isaiah 9:6 had promised. He is referred to as meek and gentle in II Corinthians 10:1. The Lamb of God had come to take away sin (John 1:29; Revelation 5:5-9) and not to sort out earthly empires. It disappointed the Jewish leaders that the Nazarene tolerated the Roman rulers whom they despised. The Messiah they looked for would be zealous for worldly empires and nonchalant toward spiritual revival. Tragically, their perversion of Scripture and misplaced emphasis caused them to be ignorant of the real work of

the Prince of Glory. Hosanna was their exulting cry based upon Psalm 118, but their concept of "save us, we pray" had nothing to do with spiritual deliverance! Charles Brewer was very perceptive in these words:

A hero stood amidst a throng
And heard them cry His name.
They praised His deeds in word and song
And shouts of loud acclaim.

A king they cried--a King of men
We want no one beside
Bring forth the crown and let Him reign
We will have no other guide.

This was their loud exulting cry
Throughout the live-long day
But ere a second night drew nigh
Their hearts had turned away.

How fickle is the heart of man
How frail is human faith
And they who have no high plan
Walk but the way of death.

There are many today who are disappointed in Jesus also. Thousands still stand at the foot of the Cross and demand that the Lord do this or that before they will believe Him! It must break the Lord's heart to hear the foolish arguments of carnal minds that reject the Savior and demand provision for secular benefits and casual delights. Nothing is so shallow as cheap grace and the carnival atmosphere of congregations that would make Christianity an excursion into politics, gimmicks and social grace rather than evangelism,

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FROM THE EDITORS

Chuck Webster

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THEY HAD BEEN WITH JESUS, Part 1

To Annas and Caiaphas the transformation was remarkable. Standing before them were two men who had never sat at the feet of any notable rabbi, or *any* rabbi for that matter. They had not attended any of the famous Roman schools of oratory or studied the principles of the distinguished philosophers. In other words, Peter and John were “unlearned and ignorant men” with little formal educational training. This fact confused the Jewish leaders. Something had to be wrong. How could untrained men deliver such confident, passionate speeches and persuade so many? Men with their lack of educational background should be tending a fishnet or plowing a field--not spreading a new religious movement. But then the high priest and his associates looked a little closer, and as they remembered the background of these men, the answer became quite obvious. No, Peter and John didn’t suddenly display a framed diploma or show off a studied dissertation. But the conclusion the Sanhedrin reached was no less telling. “...they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). And it seems that no other explanation was needed.

When Jesus selected His apostles, He chose what most would consider the “undesirables” of His day. Several were fishermen, one was a tax-collector, others were of unknown backgrounds, but apparently none had anything to distinguish him from the thousands of commoners that roamed the hills of first century Palestine. Jesus worked with this group for a little over three years and then entrusted to them history’s most valuable treasure--the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:7). These eleven men then went out and took the message of Christ to the whole world. The transformation these men went through, however, is remarkable. And all because they spent time with Jesus. It’s even more remarkable, though, that the same changes can be worked in us . . . when we’ve been with Jesus.

Spending time with Jesus will cause us to have a deeper love for souls. Near the beginning of their time with the Lord, James and John

didn’t have a good understanding of Jesus’ mission. When they saw that a city of the Samaritans did not receive messengers that Jesus had sent to prepare for His coming, they asked Jesus if they could command fire to come down from heaven and consume this city (Luke 9:54). Jesus rebuked them by saying, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them” (Luke 9:55,56). Apparently, these “sons of thunder” learned the lesson. James was later beheaded because he was trying to save the lost (Acts 12:2), instead of trying to burn them with fire. John became known as the “apostle of love” because of his emphasis on love in the books that he wrote, and late in his life he was exiled to the isle of Patmos because he loved the souls of men (Revelation 1:9). Men who once wanted to call down fire from heaven later became men who gave their lives to save souls *from* fire.

They learned much, no doubt, from simply observing the way Jesus lived His life. When Jesus taught the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well (John 4), the disciples learned to take advantage of their opportunities. Perhaps that’s why John, along with Peter, when seeing a lame man outside the temple, recognized it as an opportunity to teach people about Jesus (Acts 4). When the disciples observed the gentle way Jesus treated the adulterous woman (John 8), they certainly learned to be careful when dealing with people caught in the clutches of sin.

As we spend time with Jesus we learn the same lessons. We learn to love our friends, co-workers, neighbors, and associates enough to speak to them about the gospel. We learn to take advantage of opportunities at work or school to speak a word for Jesus. We learn to be gentle with sinners, never excusing their sins, but realizing the frailty of the human condition and recognizing their vulnerability.

Are we spending enough time with Jesus? If so, we’ll find ourselves acting more and more like Him...and it begins with our attitude toward the lost.

spiritual growth and emphasis in the divine realm. The simple message of the Cross is still offensive to many (Galatians 5:11), but it nevertheless is the wisdom and power of God to genuine believers (I Corinthians 1:18). Let us notice, in a practical way, why Christ is still rejected today!

First of all, the very simplicity of the gospel system is a problem to those with pseudo-intellectualism. Satan has always used this trick to turn men away from God (II Corinthians 11:3). Those who think more highly of themselves than they ought to, stumble at the plain, simple and straight-forward nature of truth. Such folk prefer complicated error. How sad!

DISAPPOINTED IN JESUS

In John, chapter 6, multitudes of former friends turned aside to follow Jesus no more. They were disappointed in His emphasis. In Matthew 15 many were offended in Him because of the uncompromising nature of the Master's teaching. At the very foot of the Cross several expressed grave displeasure concerning the nature of His death. Even at Golgotha our Lord was an embarrassment! Professed disciples of Christ were disillusioned with His simplicity! Our Redeemer once confessed that even foxes of the field and birds in a nest had more earthly comfort than He (Matthew 8:20). The Savior called not nobility, wealth or famous ones to be His apostles. To the lowly, unlettered Galilean fishermen the basic leadership of the heavenly movement was entrusted. Not one single credential of greatness--as men of the world evaluate--did our blessed Lord present to document the claims of eternal power. It is no wonder that His great servant Paul would later write: "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise . . . that no flesh should glory in his presence."

The Hebrew religious leaders of the first century were upset with Jesus because their vaunted traditions and pompous rites were ignored and often rebuked by the Son of God. The elite were shocked by His absolute honesty and disregard for cultural refinement. The wealthy business leaders were shocked by the Lord's evaluation of real riches and His disdain for mammon or

"filthy lucre." Even after Christ's ascension back to glory the fearless apostles were a distinct disappointment to those enamored with emperor worship, idol temples and animal sacrifices. The gospel of Christ ruined many a lucrative business based upon pagan deities and sensual goals (Acts 19:19). H.B. Hartzler graphically captured the sentiment of early Christians in this hymn:

The treasures of earth are not mine;
I hold not its silver and gold,
But a treasure far greater is mine:
I have riches of value untold.

The treasures of earth must all fail;
Its riches and honor decay,
But the riches of love that are mine,
Even death cannot take them away.

Far better than gold or wealth untold,
Are the riches of love in Christ Jesus!

Today, the peddlers of smut and dope and pornography are disappointed in the ethics of Christianity. The purveyors of illicit, immoral wantonness cry out against the high moral tone of the Bible. Lawyers in divorce courts beg for "situation ethics" and existential mores because Matthew 19:1-9 stands as a permanent roadblock in their racket of marriage brokerage. The hippies on college campuses and the Hollywood sexmongers live in filth and failure and fear because they, too, will one day have to give answer to the Judge of all the earth and they know, deep down, **how disappointed in them He truly is!** But, the greatest application of this thesis belongs in our very own midst. Thousands of church members, through the years, have been disappointed in the real Christ--not the dreamed-up, imaginary Jesus who, according to their whims, just smiles and winks at everyone's weaknesses--but the Bible-revealed One--because He demands faithfulness, purity, sincere, scriptural worship and a line of demarcation between the world and His kingdom! Unbending loyalty takes more fortitude than comfortable association with society. Sadly, some are not willing to pay the price. Are you disappointed in Jesus? Is His irrevocable standard unpleasant in your libertine existence? May we rise above the shallow, petty, carnal pace of modern living lest we deeply disappoint the Savior.

STEPHANAS, THE ADDICT

Dennis Gullede

The King James Version of the Bible is often criticized for its archaic language. There is nothing archaic about the word used to describe the household of Stephanas in 1 Corinthians 16:15. Paul said that they were “*addicted...to the ministry of the saints.*”

There is nothing out of date about the word “addicted.” We hear so much about addictions of various kinds. In its bad sense it means one who has allowed himself to become a slave to a self-destroying habit. In its good sense it describes one who is enthusiastically devoted to a good cause. It is a word which describes the truly converted.

The ministry mentioned here is not limited to the preaching of the gospel. The family of Stephanas had already responded to the gospel (1 Corinthians 1:14-16). Now, they were carrying out the other half of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:20). With them as with us,

1. *Something Needs To Be Done.* Brethren needed to be cared for (Acts 6:1-3; Galatians 6:10). Things that need to be done do not just happen. Spreading the gospel doesn’t just happen. Relieving the destitute doesn’t just happen. Edifying the church doesn’t just happen. Work in the church involves seeing the need and meeting the need (Matthew 9:37-38). Two things are inexcusable: (1) blindness (not willing to see), and (2) laziness (not willing to do).

2. *Someone Is Needed To Do The Work.* Do we

need some program of work before we can or will work? Programs are good. They involve many people in good works. However, would you work without a program? Stephanas and his family served God by serving their brethren (Matthew 25:31-46).

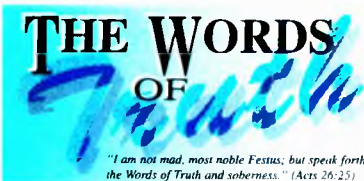
James did not say, “To him that is asked to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” He said, “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17). Sgt. Alvin C. York, when asked how he performed his deed of heroism during World War I, said, “I seen my duty and done it.” In like fashion the family of Stephanas felt that they owed everything to God to whom they had been converted.

3. *Somehow We Need More Addicts In The Lord’s Church.* An addict is one who will give up anything for the thing that has control of him. He will give up anything that is beneficial to himself and his family for the sake of the power he is under. Too many Christians seem totally unwilling to give up anything for the Lord’s business. They would not give up sleep, time, money, TV or any convenience to better equip themselves to the ministry of the saints. To some brethren any sacrifice is too heavy. We would be so much more effective if we all became spiritual addicts to the cause of Christ.

This world is the sphere of service. The world to come is the sphere of both punishments or rewards. The service we have an opportunity of doing we must do while we have the opportunity (John 9:4).

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THE WORDS OF Truth

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness." (Acts 26:25)*

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

HOW DOES GOD COMMUNICATE
TO MAN TODAY?
THEY HAD BEEN WITH JESUS,
Part 2
YOUR SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT!
THE BREVITY OF LIFE

Vol. 35 No. 40

October 22, 1998

HOW DOES GOD COMMUNICATE TO MAN TODAY?

Neal Pollard

Several years ago, upon throwing several of her children out of a high window, a young woman claimed that God told her to do it. About a decade ago, Oral Roberts claimed that God told him He would end his life if he did not raise so many millions of dollars by a specified date. Countless are the charismatics who say that God's Spirit overwhelmed them and directly operated upon their hearts to persuade them to "be saved." Claims of visions, illuminations, appearances, and conversations between people and the Living God could be cited by the ton.

Does God reveal Himself in this way today, speaking directly to man? No doubt He once operated in this way from time to time. Thus appeared God to Noah (Genesis 8:15ff), Jacob (Genesis 35:15), Job (38:1ff), Moses (Exodus 6:2ff; Mark 12:26, John 9:29), Samuel (I Samuel 3:1ff), Gad (I Chronicles 21:9), Ahaz (Isaiah 7:10), Jeremiah (1:5), and many, many others. Most are familiar with the dreams of Abimelech (Genesis 20:3), Jacob (Genesis 32:24ff), Laban (Genesis 31:24), Joseph (Genesis 37:5ff), the Egyptian Pharaoh and his servants (Genesis 40-41), Gideon (Judges 7:13ff), Solomon (I Kings 3:5), Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2:1ff), Belshazzar (Daniel 7:1ff), Joseph (Matthew 1:20), the Magi (Matthew 2:7ff), Mrs. Pilate (Matthew 27:19), the early Christians (Acts 2:17; 9:10; 10:10), and Cornelius (Acts 10:3). Through the trances, visions, and dreams God relayed good and bad news, but in all made revelations not previously known to the recipients. Many claim that God still does that, but is that so?

If He does, God is a respecter of persons (cf. Acts 10:34-35). If He bestows a dream to one man but not to his neighbor, how is He not showing partiality and favoritism? Why would God

share a new revelation to one person but not to all? The difference between the dreams and conversations taking place in the Old and New Testaments and the present age is the Bible. There was not a complete revelation then, but there is today. Now, everyone has been given, equally, all things necessary for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). For God to hand out direct revelations apart from the written word is for God to betray His promise, "who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work" (I Peter 1:17).

If He does, God is engaging in either contradictory or superfluous activity. No matter what He reveals to one in such a dream, God's character is maligned by the very action. If God tells one to do something contrary to what He has taught in His word, God is caught in a contradiction. If God tells one to do something not already revealed in His word, He is a liar (cf. Titus 1:2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3; Psalm 119:160, ASV). If God tells one to do something He has already said in the Bible, for what purpose did He lead man to write it in the first place? If God intended to directly reveal His word to men and women in dreams, trances, and visions, why write the Bible at all?

If He does, God in some measure relieves man of his personal accountability (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:10). If God tells a woman to become a preacher in the church, who is to question God? Who is to fault the woman? If God tells a song leader to form a choir or hire a band to play with the singing, it must be right. Whoever disagrees can take it up with God. If God tells a man or woman to leave his or her mate for another, who could stand in the way? Whatever God grants permission about or forbids, who can hold

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FROM THE EDITORS

Chuck Webster

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THEY HAD BEEN WITH JESUS, Part 2

As Annas and Caiaphas realized, people who spend time with Jesus develop remarkable traits (Acts 4:13). The apostles, once a group with questionable love for the lost, turned into men who willingly gave their lives to preach the gospel to the unsaved . . . after being with Jesus. But the changes go even farther than that. As we watch the apostles' development, as well as our own, it's interesting also to note the following change:

Spending time with Jesus will weaken our dependence on this life.

On the night before Jesus died, His disciples were faced with a dilemma that forced them to choose between their love for their Master and their love for living. When Judas led the band of soldiers into Gethsemane, the disciples at first stood strong. Peter even drew his sword and cut off Malchus' ear. But in the end, their love of this life overcame, and, as Mark writes, "they all forsook him, and fled" (Mark 14:50). As far as we know, only one was anywhere near the cross on Friday afternoon (John 19:26). Even after being told about Jesus' resurrection, the eleven were still overcome with fear: they assembled behind closed doors "for fear of the Jews" (John 20:19). Their timidity is soon abandoned, however after they are convinced of Jesus' resurrection and after they receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 1,2). The same men who once trembled at threats to their lives and ran in the face of physical danger later respond to intimidation by saying: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19,20). We see excitement, rather than fear, in the eyes of the apostles after they're beaten for preaching the gospel (Acts 5:41). There's no sign of apprehension in James as he falls to Herod's sword (Acts 12:2). Peter exhibits the same fearlessness shortly thereafter when he sleeps soundly in

prison after being arrested with the same intentions in Herod's mind (Acts 12:6). Time and time again, the once timid followers of Jesus manifested their lack of concern for their physical lives. Tradition says that all but John died a martyr's death for the cause of Christ. That gives new meaning to today's catch phrase: "No Fear."

We naturally have a strong sense of survival, with every instinct geared toward extending our physical life. That's why we cringe at the thought of facing the surgeon's scalpel or the prospect of dying. It's part of our physical make-up. For that reason, it takes something beyond us to cause us to abandon those natural tendencies. That's where time with Jesus come in. Like the disciples demonstrate, time with Jesus causes us to change our focus. With Paul we can say, "For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain. But if *I* live on in the flesh, this *will mean* fruit from *my* labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is* far better" (Philippians 1:21-23; NKJV). As we spend more and more time with the Lord, we think more about reaching forward to eternity and less about clinging to the temporal things of this life. Thoughts of crossing the chasm that awaits us hold fewer fears and more thrills. Will we ever reach a point where we are completely able to deem as unimportant all ties to this life? Likely not. Even if we could, God doesn't want us to quit living. But the more time we spend with the Lord, the more we'll enjoy the precious moments we have here while anticipating the eternity ahead.

It took some time, but the apostles learned that cultivating eternal life was more important than extending physical life. We can learn the same lesson, but it will come only after spending time with the Giver of life.

HOW DOES GOD COMMUNICATE TO MAN TODAY?, *continued from Page 1*

one accountable who does what God says? Who cannot see the illogical conclusion of such claims? If God makes "direct appearances," He allows man to act in a manner beyond question and impunity.

If He does, God is the author of confusion and not of peace (1 Corinthians 14:33). Listen to the claims people make about visions received from God. He tells different people different ways to be saved, different moral codes by which to live, and different ways to worship Him. But, dig beneath the claims and all that is usually left is a personal agenda, illicit lifestyle preferences, monetary gain, or a yen for prestige and fame. People who want to do what 'they' want to do will go so far as to say that God Himself gave the authoriza-

tion. How pitiful!

God has given man today an infallible pattern for living and teaching. It is the 'one faith' (Ephesians 4:5) which prohibits religious confusion. It holds everyone accountable to a standard of conduct (James 3:1-2; 1 Peter 5:4; Revelation 2:10). It is always meaningful and applicable, and never nonsensical. It is blind to color, race, wealth, gender, and station (Galatians 3:29). It prevents the dangerous, unsubstantiated claims of self-centered people intent on blaming God for their own whims. Does God answer prayers and work through divine providence? Absolutely! Does He appear in dreams, visions, and the like today? Absolutely NOT!

YOUR SINS WILL FIND YOU OUT!

Via Fayetteville, Ark.

It is impossible for men and women to sin and get away with it. As Isaiah wrote, "*Our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and we know our iniquities*" (Isaiah 59:12). But no matter how often this lesson is repeated, people continue to delude themselves that they can enjoy the pleasures of sin without paying the price. Our world needs to hear the warning of Moses in Numbers 32:23: "*Be sure your sin will find you out!*"

Sin will come out! Notice some ways in which "*sin will find you out...*"

1. In the Conscience. I must live with my conscience 24 hours a day. Though I may temporarily hide my sins from others I cannot hide them from myself. I will be accused by my own conscience. "*The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest... There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked*" (Isaiah 57:20,24). Sin destroys self respect. It drives out peace of mind. It builds a load of guilt. It is impossible to sin and feel good about it!

2. In the Body. Eventually, sin will tell on your health; it will weaken and scar the body. Sin leaves its mark. You see it on the alcoholic, the sexually promiscuous, the drug addict! (Proverbs 23:29-35). Movie idol Rock Hudson successfully hid his homosexuality from fans for years, but in the end his body betrayed him. He died of AIDS! An old preacher who had lived a wild life as a youth once remarked: "God will forgive you, but your body never does!"

3. In the Character. Sin is a reproach to any

people! Evil deeds make evil men. Sin unchecked leads to the complete corruption of the character. The worst thing about alcohol is not what it does to the brain or the liver; the worst thing is what it does to character! For drink a man may come to beat his wife, starve his children, break up his home and lose his soul! "*Sin makes monsters of us all!*"

4. In the Community. It is impossible to keep wrong-doing hidden for very long. Will Rogers used to say: "You can fool all the people some of the time and some of the people all the time, but you can't fool all the people all the time." The truth comes out! David thought he had hidden his sin with Bathsheba, but today the whole world knows about it!

5. In the Judgment. When Jesus comes, He "*will bring to light the things hidden in darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts...*" (1 Corinthians 4:5). Every secret thing, every idle word will be brought into judgment (Matthew 12:36). It is impossible to escape the knowledge of God (Psalm 139:1-12). As the old spiritual has it: "*My Lord sees all you do; My Lord hears all you say; And my Lord keeps on a-writin' all the time.*"

There is only one way we can ever really put our sins behind us! They can be washed away in the blood of Christ (Hebrews 6:18,19; Romans 5:8,9). If we confess our sin and surrender to grace, God will forgive (1 John 1:9). Either our sin must be blotted out, or it will find us out!

THE BREVITY OF LIFE

B.J. Clarke

They didn't even know what hit them. Some years ago, three professional baseball players, out for an evening of enjoyment and relaxation, smashed into a boat dock at a high rate of speed. Steven Olin died instantly. Tim Crews died hours later at the hospital. Both left behind young wives and young children. In a split second the youthful exuberance, earthly hopes, dreams, and goals of these two men were snuffed out of existence. The high priced contracts they had signed were suddenly meaningless. They didn't expect to die that night, but they did.

He didn't even know what hit him. He was sitting in his house in California when a large boulder came tumbling down the mountain adjacent to his home. It smashed through the roof of his house and landed on top of him as he was reclining on the couch. He didn't expect to die that day, but he did.

They didn't even know what hit them. Their names are recorded on the pages of Sacred Scripture for all to behold. Their lives were put out like a candle in an instant. Who can forget about Nadab and Abihu (*Lev. 10*), the 250 men who offered incense (*Numbers 16:35*), the thousands in the congregation of Israel whose lives were taken by the Lord "as in a moment" (*Numbers 16:46ff*), the Philistines slain at Samson's death (*Judges 16:29,30*), Goliath (*1 Samuel 17*), Uzzah (*2 Sam. 6:6ff*), Job's children (*Job 1:18,19*), 185,000 Assyrian soldiers (*Isa. 37:36*), the men who threw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the fiery furnace (*Daniel 3:22*), Belshazzar (*Daniel 5:30*), the 18 upon whom the tower of Siloam fell

(*Luke 13:4*), the rich fool (*Luke 12:13-21*) and Ananias and Sapphira (*Acts 5:1-10*)?

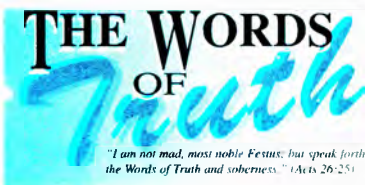
The aforementioned examples remind us of the need to heed the inspired words of *Proverbs 27:1*, "*Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.*" Truly, there is but a step between me and death (*1 Sam. 20:3*). We are just a heartbeat away from eternity. We know not the day of our death (*Gen. 27:2*).

While it is true that God does not miraculously extinguish life today, and whereas we may never die suddenly and without warning, life is still very, very brief. James wrote, "*Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*" (*Jas. 4:13,14*). The Psalmist declared that we spend our years as a tale that is told. "*The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away*" (*Psm. 90:9,10*). Man is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and is cut down. He flees like a shadow and does not continue (*Job 14:1,2*).

I don't expect to die today, but I might. So might you. That being the case, we must number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom (*Psa. 90:12*). We must redeem the time (*Eph. 5:16*) by being prepared at all times for the day of our death. You're not ready to live until you're ready to die! Are you ready?

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THE WORDS OF Truth

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness" (Acts 26:25).*

Vol. 35 No. 41

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October 29, 1998

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE CHURCH

Cecil May, Jr.

The Lord built what he promised he would build (Matthew 16:18). In English we call it a church.

It is not made of bricks or wood, but of living stones, of redeemed people (I Peter 2:5).

The old saying, "You can't join the church; the Lord adds you to it," is true and needs to be repeated often. It is reduced to a meaningless quibble, however, when some say, "You should become a member of the church to be where salvation is." There is no definable distinction between setting out to join something and setting out to become a member of something.

We are not to seek a church and join it to be saved. We are to seek the Lord (or yield to being sought by Him), and He redeems us. When we are added to the number of the redeemed, we are added to the church. The saved are the church.

The difference is more than semantics. There are not forty-two different reasons why I am a member of the church of Christ. I am not a member of it because it teaches this or practices that. I am a member of it because, when Jesus saved me, He added me to it.

There are many religious denominations. From the standpoint of an outsider, the church of the Lord may appear to be one of them.

The Lord's church, however, is not one among many. Like Jesus as Son of God, the church is one-of-a-kind, unique.

The church is God's family. Every child of God is a part of it. It is the kingdom of God on earth, the bride of Christ, the body of Christ. God saves, and God adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:41,47). God delivers from the power of darkness, and God translates those He delivers into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Colossians 1:13). He makes no mistakes. Everyone whom God has saved has been added to the church, and they, and only they, are the church.

If we narrowly define the church to include only those we know about, or only those who came into contact with Christ through someone we know, or if we broaden it so as to include those who have never been born into God's family, we denominationalize it. When we talk about "Church of Christ doctrine," "Church of Christ preachers," "Church of Christ schools," or even, God forbid, but as I have heard, "the Church of Christ Church," we hide from those who hear our speech the biblical truth of what the church is.

The church is not the ark of safety; Christ is, but the church is in the ark of safety. The church does not save us; Christ does, but Christ saves the church. "He is the savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:23).

FROM THE EDITORS

Levi Sides

Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
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A CHALLENGE TO EACH MEMBER... FOLLOWING UP A GOSPEL MEETING

Our gospel meeting with brother Kenneth Randolph is in the past, but the challenge of getting the most possible good out of that week is in the present and future!

Much preparation and work was put into having a good meeting. Now that the meeting is behind us, let us not allow the zeal, inviting, teaching, and study to stop. Instead of viewing the meeting as the culmination of our efforts, we should look upon it as a springboard for furthering the Lord's work. We should:

1. FOLLOW UP ON VISITORS - We had a good number of visitors who are not Christians. Perhaps their interest was aroused, maybe they have some questions and would welcome someone to study with them. Go to see them, write a letter, or make a phone call to let them know of your interest in them.

2. STUDY ON THE SERMON TOPICS - Think back and see how many of the subjects from the meeting you can remember. What important points and principles do you recall? What was said which you needed in particular? Ask others about what they can remember and edify each other by discussing scriptural points brother Randolph made. We all need to reinforce what we have learned (Hebrews 2:1-3).

3. PRAY FOR CONTINUED EFFECT OF THE LESSONS - In Ephesians 6:18-19 and 2 Thessalonians 3:1 Paul asked for the prayers of the brethren for future work he had in mind. Though the preaching of this meeting has been done already, we still are hopeful for its effect in the hearts of those who have heard it.

4. MAINTAIN THE ZEAL A MEETING INSPIRES - It is easy to get excited in anticipation for a meeting, but we need to maintain the burning desire to see the Lord's work done. Let us work from the zeal built up during the meeting. Keep inviting people to services or to have Bible studies. Remember that all your work in the Lord is profitable (1 Corinthians 15:58).

5. LOOK FORWARD TO THE NEXT MEETING - Think of those you would like to see come and begin making contact with them. Invite them to services, discuss the scripture with them. In so doing, by the time we have our next meeting (maybe even before) they will come or perhaps will be ready to obey the gospel.

Remember that our ultimate aim in any of our work is to get ready for eternity. Are you ready?

DISOBEDIENT CHILDREN AND PARENTS WHO ALLOW THEM TO DISOBEY

David Sain

God has said, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right," and "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:1, 4).

In other words, Mom and Dad, you have authority over your children. Exercise it! You have a responsibility to God. Fulfill it!

And, parents, don't nag your children. Don't keep

telling your child over and over to do something or not to do something. Mom and Dad, stay in control! Set rules and enforce them. One of the greatest lessons that you will ever teach your child is that disobedience to those in authority brings consequences.

Teaching your child to obey those in authority prepares your child to obey God--the ultimate authority.

CULTS

Daniel Ridinger

More than a decade ago cult leader Jim Jones and his followers committed mass suicide in Guyana. David Koresh and a number of his followers burned to death in Waco, Texas. More recently, the Aum Shinn Kyo cult killed some people in a Tokyo subway with nerve gas.

What is a cult? The word *cult* in *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* is defined as "a religion regarded as unorthodox or spurious; also its body of adherents...a usu. small circle of persons united by devotion or allegiance to an artistic or intellectual movement or figure."

Why do cults appeal to people? A pamphlet entitled *Understanding Cult Involvement* printed by the University of California, Berkley, lists the following characteristics of a cult:

- * a leader who claims divinity or a special relationship with God
- * a leader who is the sole judge of a member's actions
- * totalitarian governance
- * totalistic control over members' daily lives
- * exclusivity and isolation
- * development of deep emotional dependence
- * prohibition of critical analysis and independent thinking

- * utilization of methods of ego destruction and mind control
- * exploitation of a member's finances
- * underemployment and exploitative working conditions

The same tract gave the following reasons why some people are recruited by cults:

- * they are lonely and in need of friends
- * they don't know how to say "no"
- * they have been deceived and systematically entrapped
- * they don't know what the group believes in, why the group wants them, and what the group will demand from them

What is the church's responsibility concerning cults? God's people must be aware of our society's religious climate. Often times brethren are unaware of cultic movements until tragedy strikes. We should acquaint ourselves with relevant materials concerning cults. We need to shower compassion and love on those who feel friendless and forsaken. We should direct people's minds to the Cross of Christ. Jesus is the Messiah and the only hope for humanity. Jesus said, "...I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

BIBLE PREACHING

B. C. Goodpasture

Many in this generation berate and downgrade the man who preaches the Bible. This is not altogether surprising. Naturally, those who do not believe the Bible and those who undervalue its authority do not think well of the preaching of it. But there are those within the church who have reached the point where they do "not endure sound doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:3). Paul, with inspired prophetic insight, predicted that such would happen. Again, men sometimes seem to feel that, considering their vast learning (whether real or imaginary does not greatly matter), it would be an act of intolerable condescension on their part to preach the simple principles of New Testament Christianity. They want something that "sounds" scholarly and philosophical. Such were not the preachers of apostolic times.

On Pentecost, Peter, an inspired preacher, delivered a great sermon, more than a third of which was composed of quotations from the Old Testament. Paul, in his great speech in Pisidian Antioch, drew heavily

upon the same source. He even told where to find one passage he quoted - "the second Psalm" (Acts 13:33). Now, they say, such practice is not in "good taste." What a pity that Peter, Paul, and Jesus, who frequently referred to portions of the Old Testament (Luke 24:44), did not know this! They were "Bible preachers."

Times may change; times do change; but the time will never come when the gospel of Christ will be out of date. Methods of preaching and teaching may change; means of transportation may be improved and used, but man's need for "the truth" that makes men free will not cease. Lost men must hear the truth that saves. It is a crime against God and man not to deliver such truth—the gospel. Preaching which does not reveal to lost men the way of salvation is not what they need. "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread" (Isaiah 55:2).

WHEN SHOULD CHILDREN BE BAPTIZED?

Paul Sain

First, there is not a specific time or age when ALL should become Christians. It is not "age" but "stage" that should be emphasized. People are different. One may learn about the love and desires of Jehovah God very quickly, while another may not grasp the facts, even if given additional time. One individual may "know" many facts of the Bible, but never obey Christ and become a follower of the Savior.

Another way of saying basically the same thing is: a young person (teenager or younger) may know far more about God's Word, and what one must do to go to heaven, than a fifty year old. It is NOT age that determines when a person is accountable to God.

Second, there is not a set amount of exact facts and data that must be learned before one can become a Christian. The multitude of people who heard Peter (and the eleven apostles) on the day of Pentecost obeyed after hearing one gospel sermon. It was obviously impossible for them to know every detail and fact. But after hearing Jesus Christ proclaimed as the Son of God, the Savior, and being taught the way one must follow in order to reach heaven, they were touched (pricked) in their heart, and asked what they had to do to be saved. They were told to "Repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins" (Acts 2:38). About 3,000 obeyed, becoming children of God (Acts 2:41) on the day the church was established (about A.D. 33)!

The key to this inquiry is also found in the "commission" of our Lord to His disciples, as recorded by Matthew. Jesus told them to "Go ye...and teach all

nations, baptizing them." But the Lord continued in the following verse, instructing: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you..." (Matthew 28:19-20). We are to teach, baptize, and continue to teach. If we grow as we should (2 Peter 3:18), the student will then become a teacher to others (Hebrews 5:12-14).

People should be baptized, becoming children of God, when they understand the basic facts of the gospel, such as: (1) God loves them and wants everyone to be saved. (2) God gave His only Son, to come to earth and ultimately die, to pay the ransom price, to shed His blood for all (Hebrews 9:22; Acts 20:28). (3) Jesus invites all to come to Him for peace, rest, forgiveness, salvation. (4) Only those who obey and do the will of the Father will be saved (Matthew 7:21; Hebrews 5:8-9). (5) Salvation from our sins is found only in Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; Ephesians 1:3). (6) We enter Jesus Christ, and are added to His church, when we believe/have faith (John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6); repent (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30); confess Him as the Son of God (Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10); and when we are baptized (immersed in water) for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21).

At all times we should encourage (and teach) our children to obey God! We should teach (and demonstrate in our lives) that for one to become a Christian is wonderful, a great decision, and it makes God happy! We should do everything within our power to help our children make heaven their eternal home.

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Vol. 35 No. 42

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**THE HIGH PRICE OF FILTH
THEY HAD BEEN WITH JESUS -
Part 3
GOD'S LOVE IN US
THE BIBLE PASSES THE TEST**

THE HIGH PRICE OF FILTH

Hayden Childs

"As in water face reveals face, So a man's heart reveals the man. Hell and Destruction are never full; So the eyes of man are never satisfied." This may explain why the purveyors of filth continue to make terrific financial gain each passing year.

Did you know?

Late-night adult telephone lines are a \$6 billion per year industry.

U.S. phone companies estimate 70% of the 500,000 daily calls to Dial-a-porn are made by minors.

98.9% of the consumers of online porn are men.

One of the leading companies promoting porn in America received 4.7 million hits (electronic visits) in a recent seven day period.

89% of all intimate relationships on prime-time TV are outside marriage.

This exposure can clearly result in altered moral judgment, according to Dr. J. Bryant & S.C. Rockwell of the University of Alabama.

Porn video sales and rentals soared 75% from 1992-94.

The sale of pornographic magazines and videos has reached an estimated \$10 billion in sales today.

There are more outlets for hard-core porn in this country (15,000-20,000) than McDonald's restaurants (approximately 9,000).

One in three girls and one in seven boys will be molested before the age of 18.

A woman is raped in this country every 46 seconds, according to reported attacks. Most studies suggest that only one in ten cases is ever reported.

Pornography can be as "mood altering" and as addictive as narcotics.

(via facts about Pornography, American Family Association, Tupelo, MS.)

1. "Be careful little eyes what you see, there's a Father up above looking down in tender love, so be careful little eyes what you see."

I can remember singing that song in Bible class and Vacation Bible School from an early age. David said, "I will set nothing wicked before my eyes..." (Psalm 101:3). Job said, "I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then

should I look upon a young woman?" (Job 31:1). Jesus said, "Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness... (Matthew 6:22-23). Peter spoke of men, "having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, beguiling unstable souls" (2 Peter 2:14).

2. Filth and obscenity of every sort continue to thrive and prosper in America.

Don Wildmon of Tupelo, Mississippi, has probably done more to lead the fight against the scourge of pornography. For the past 25 years the American Family Association has fought for morality in this nation.

Boycotts, protests, sermons, and demonstrations have been held. This scourge continues to flourish in our land. We may never completely put the pornographers out of business. It comes down to this: we may not clean up the world in which we live, but we CAN keep ourselves morally clean and pure in the environment in which we live (James 1:27; 1 John 2:15-17; Matthew 5:13-16).

3. Piety or worldliness?

Christianity must be expressed in the home. Parents must provide an atmosphere conducive to the development of Christian character (Ephesians 6:4; Proverbs 22:6). The reading materials found in our homes reveal a great deal about the people who reside there. One is what he thinks about and feeds his mind upon (Philippians 4:8). One will usually find entertainment in sports magazines, but rarely will one see anything to nourish the spiritual man. Bibles are out of sight and out of mind. Religious journals and magazines are nowhere to be found.

Do we wonder why our children leave the faith? So many times it is because we as parents and grandparents do not practice in our home life what we preach on Sunday when we assemble with the saints.

The ultimate cost of involvement with pornography is that it will cost us our soul! "Thesexually immoral...shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8).

FROM THE EDITORS

Chuck Webster

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THEY HAD BEEN WITH JESUS - Part 3

Interesting things happen when people spend time with God. The Israelites discovered this when they saw Moses after he had been on the mount with God for forty days. When Moses came down off the mountain and spoke with the people, his "face shone" (Exodus 34:28ff.). Evidently, it must have been amazing, because the people were afraid to get close to him. That certainly wasn't the last time, however, that God's presence created differences in those fortunate enough to be blessed by it. As we've discussed in the last few weeks, the fact that Peter and John had "been with Jesus" seemed sufficient explanation for their confidence (Acts 4:13). What a tremendous opportunity for these men to have been able to spend over three years with God's Son! That time, though, affected them in many ways--ways in which it will influence us as we walk with Him.

Spending time with Jesus will cause us to think less of success and more of service. It would almost be funny, if it weren't such a serious situation. Jesus and the twelve were traveling to Capernaum one day, and on the way the disciples got into an argument (Mark 9:30ff.). The topic of the dispute wasn't a tenet of theology or the meaning of an Old Testament passage, nor was it a matter of how best to do personal evangelism. Like boys in the backyard arguing about who's the toughest, the twelve were debating about who should be the greatest in the kingdom. On the evening of the Last Supper, none of the disciples were willing to wash the feet of the others, ignoring a common practice in New Testament times (John 13). From all indications, during most of their time with Jesus, the disciples were overly concerned about status and appearance. But things changed after they spent time with the Lord. Jesus' response to their argument was an object lesson: he took a child and taught them a lesson about child-like humility. When the apostles were too proud to humble them-

selves and wash one another's feet, the Son of God got down on His own knees and did it Himself. They never forgot these lessons. The apostle (John) whose mother once asked Jesus to allow him and his brother to occupy the most prestigious places in the kingdom later harshly criticized Diotrefes for seeking preeminence (3 John 9,10). The apostle (Peter) whose voice probably argued the loudest in the dispute on the road to Capernaum later refused homage offered to him by Cornelius (Acts 10:25,26) and encouraged us through his writings to be "clothed with humility" (1 Peter 5:5,6). Paul and Barnabas were exasperated when the people of Lystra attempted to exalt them (Acts 14:11-18). Clearly, the apostles learned the lesson of humility, but it took a great deal of patience and teaching on the part of Jesus to bring them to this point.

It might take a lot of time with us as well. Like the apostles, many today have the tendency to desire positions of prominence. Some seek the eldership for the authority it holds. Others desire to preach to receive the praise of men. Some lead singing, teach class, earn advanced degrees, or write books to attain preeminence. It's not so with those who spend much time with the Lord. Instead of desiring the chief seats (Matthew 23:6), they want the seat at Jesus' feet (Luke 10:39). They don't have a haughty spirit; rather, they have the mind of Jesus (Philippians 2:5). They recognize that God abases those who exalt themselves and exalts those who humble themselves (Matthew 23:12).

Who could take ambitious, power-hungry men and turn them into a group of humble servants? The answer is simple: they spent many hours with God--the One who loved us enough to give up heaven's glory for a servant's life. Today, true servanthood comes the same way. Humility comes to those who spend time with Jesus.

GOD'S LOVE IN US

Johnny Ramsey

In loving-kindness Jesus came,
My soul in mercy to reclaim
And from the depths of sin and shame
Through grace He lifted me...

Christ was not sent from glory to condemn us but to save us is the grand message of John 3:17! Such tremendous charity caused the only begotten to lay down His life for us (John 15:13) and go to Golgotha to ransom us from a Devil's hell (I Timothy 2:6). This should cause us to love one another fervently (I Peter 1:22) and the Godhead supremely (Psalms 116:1). In Hosea we learn that Jehovah loves us freely and drew us to Deity with bands of love. The Scottish people have a beautiful term known as leal-love which means love with loyalty. May we never leave our first love for divine mandates (Revelation 2:4-5). When we love the God of heaven as we should all else falls into proper place as Jesus taught in Matthew 22:37-40.

It is sad to honestly report that Christ taught us to love our enemies, and some of us evidently do not even love our own brethren! If some of us worked as hard to comfort and encourage one another as we do to condemn and isolate our brethren, there would be far more unity in our midst. Even though Peter denied the Master three times, Jesus came back to him and asked Peter to affirm three times the love he had failed to express previously (Luke 22:61; John 21:15). That is, indeed, true love!

A little boy came home from school one day to see his dog caught in a fence. His favorite friend, the dog, was in pain and agony. The boy tried to pull the dog out of his misery to freedom, but the frightened animal bit him on the hand. Did the lad kick the puppy? No, he went around to the back of the fence and pulled him out that way. Why? Because he loved his dog and hated to see him in pain. When we love our brethren, like that lad loved a dumb animal, we will, in love, try constantly to extricate one another from trouble. In I John, over and over, we see that genuine brotherly love causes us to pass from death to life (I John 3:14). Cain hated Abel because of envy (I John 3:11-12). It is significant that he asked: "Am I my brother's keeper?"

We keep animals; we care for brothers. Cain should have said: Am I my brother's brother? The elder brother of Luke 15 was of the same sad mind-set. He would not even call him brother but told the father that it was his son, and not my brother, who returned from the pen of pigs!

Since the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5) we should be rooted and grounded in the love of brethren. As Colossians 2:2 informs us, such hearts are knit together in devotion toward fellow saints. God draws us to repentance with the riches of His infinite grace (Romans 2:4). Real brotherly love draws and

never repels. If heaven could love us with active good will when we were not easy to be appreciated due to the scars of sin, then surely we can go out of our way to show compassion for those made ugly by the stain of licentious behavior (Jude 23).

Jesus loved us and washed us from our sins (Revelation 1:5) and He sends us on the Great Commission to every creature in every nation till the end of time to give hope to those in the quicksand of shame overwhelmed by Satan's nefarious schemes.

All day long God holds out arms of tender concern for the disobedient gainsayers polluted by the garbage of the world (Romans 10:2). Surely we can extend kindness to brethren who long for a helping hand. The debt we owe to all is to love one another (Romans 13:8). We should abound more and more in this grace (I Thessalonians 3:12). And, if we claim to love God, whom we have not seen, while hating our brother whom we have seen, the Bible calls us a liar (I John 4:20). This does not mean that we tolerate, overlook, or white-wash error and immorality (Romans 16:17; I Corinthians 5). But, in spite of such ungodliness, we yearn for the saving of the souls of those caught in the Tempter's snare. Love, brotherly compassion, cried out to us to pull them up to higher ground (I Timothy 1:19-20).

In the previous reference Paul cared enough for two erring brethren to go to extreme measures so that their souls might be saved in the Judgment Day. When we rebuke those in error or expose some liberal brother or church, is our motive one of concern and sadness, or do we delight in pointing out departures from the faith and find joy in "skinning the hide" of someone? Did we write that article or publish that paper because we love the brotherhood (I Peter 2:17), or for the purpose of making ourselves look righteous? Did we write a clever paragraph with cute wording and then laugh because our journalistic skills might put us in the company of editors whose only emphasis--in every issue--is to dig up dirt and find favor with self-appointed watch dogs? Remember the famous statement: "When we sling mud we lose ground."

Yes, brethren, we must be on guard against false teachers, rampant error, and shallow thinking in the spiritual realm. But, when we must point out apostasy do we do so with a tear in our eye and a lump in our throat? It should be with a heavy heart that we pen words or speak sentiments that tell of the departure of those who once stood with us in the fight for truth and right. Paul was in deep sorrow when he wrote of a former co-worker:
"Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world."

Such things should break our hearts too!

THE BIBLE PASSES THE TEST

Wayne Jackson

The Bible contains two kinds of information. Some of it can be checked; some of it cannot. The Bible contains hundreds of references that arise out of the background of human history. These may be tested for accuracy. If it is the case that the Bible is demonstrated to be *absolutely precise* in thousands of historical details, it is not unreasonable to conclude that its information in other matters is equally correct. One of the most amazing features of the Bible is its uncanny reliability in the smallest of details. Let us note a few examples of incidental biblical precision.

During his personal ministry Jesus once passed through the region of Samaria. Near Sychar, the Lord stopped for a brief rest at Jacob's well. He engaged a Samaritan woman in conversation, during which He suggested that He could provide the woman with water which could perpetually quench her thirst. Misunderstanding the nature of the Master's instruction, the woman, alluding to Jacob's well, declared: "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep" (John 4:11). The statement is quite correct for even now, some twenty centuries later, Jacob's well is approximately 80 feet deep. That is the equivalent of an eight-story building.

Reflect upon another example. In Acts 10 there is the account of Peter's visit in the city of Joppa. Luke declares that Peter was staying in the home of Simon, a tanner of animal hides. Then the historian says, almost as an afterthought, "whose house is by the seaside" (Acts 10:6). Hugh J. Schonfield, a scholar who is certainly no friend to Christianity, has comment-

ed on this passage:

"This is an interesting factual detail, because the tanners used sea water in the process of converting hides into leather. The skins were soaked in the sea and then treated with lime before the hair was scraped off."

Consider another interesting case of Bible precision. When Paul was en route to Rome for trial, the ship upon which he sailed became involved in a terrible storm. When it eventually became apparent that the vessel was in a very dangerous circumstance, the crew cast the ship's anchors into the water. At the same time, they "loosed the rudder bands, hoisted up the foresail, and aimed the ship towards the beach" (Acts 27:40). There is an interesting and subtle point in the original Greek text that is not apparent in the English King James Version of the Bible. The original language actually says that they "loosed the bands of the **rudders**" (plural). This is amazingly precise, for in ancient times, ships actually possessed two paddle-rudders, not a single rudder as with modern vessels. In 1969, a submerged ancient ship was discovered in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Cyprus. An examination of the ruins gave evidence of dual rudder oars by which the boat was steered (see *National Geographic*, Nov. 1974), thus demonstrating the remarkable accuracy of Luke's record.

The Bible can be tested repeatedly – historically, geographically, scientifically, etc. And it *always passes the test!* Its incredible accuracy can only be explained in terms of its *divine inspiration*.

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness" (Acts 26:25).*

Vol. 35 No. 43

November 12, 1998

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

OH COME, LET US WORSHIP
THE LORD!

GIVING THANKS AT
THANKSGIVING

THANKSGIVING

OH COME, LET US WORSHIP THE LORD!

Betty Burton Choate

Oh come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker, For He is our God! (Psalm 95:6).

Jesus described worship in His new dispensation with these words: **"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth..."** (John 4:23).

Let us remove ourselves from the tradition of 'worship' as many in the Lord's church have experienced it, week after week, all of their lives, and look at biblical statements which describe the *reality* of worship.

Genesis 24:26: Then the man *bow*ed down his head and worshiped the Lord.

Genesis 17:3: Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him...

Exodus 34:8: So Moses *made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped.*

I Chronicles 16:23, 26, 29, 36: *Sing to the Lord...Give to the Lord glory and strength...Bring an offering and come before Him. Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth...And all the people said, "Amen!" and praised the Lord.*

Psalm 66:4: All the earth shall worship You and sing praises to You.

Psalm 99:5: Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at His footstool; for He is holy.

I Corinthians 14:25: ...and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God...

Revelation 5:14: And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.

Even Satan, when he tempted Christ to worship him, knew exactly what he must have to satisfy his hunger for exaltation: **"And these things I will give you if you will fall down and worship me"** (Matthew 4:9).

I have no desire to be accusing or unduly criti-

cal, but I think a personal examination concerning our worship would be very helpful. Jesus, Himself, states emphatically that only one type of worship is *acceptable* to God: **"...those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth"** (John 4:24).

Too often, as I am sitting in my seat in the church building, surrounded by the typical distractions and devotions, as I am passing through the biblically prescribed vehicles of worship--that is, singing, praying, partaking of the Lord's Supper, studying, and giving--I feel myself to be physically and emotionally relaxed, mentally floating through thoughts concerning what is being said, monetary examination of self, reflections of yesterday and tomorrow, feeling myself to be a 'spectator,' being 'entertained'...

Too often, I may be *thinking about spiritual things*, without being *actively conscious* of being in the *presence of God!* At the end of a designated worship period, in retrospect it is amazing to realize that sometimes I have not worshiped at all. I have sung songs about *myself* and *my* anticipation of eventually going to heaven; I have listened to words of a prayer about the *congregation's* collective wishes and needs; I have focused my attention on the *ability and the thoughts presented by a preacher*, usually dealing with my comprehension of God's message, *my* response to it, about *my* own self-image and how to feel better about *myself*, or even about the wondrous things God in His love has done for *me*; I have made a cursory examination of *my* past week's behavior as brief prayers were said and the bread and the fruit of the vine passed down my pew; I have written a check from *my* week's earnings and laid it in the basket, conscious of the fact that these funds are necessary to pay for the building, the utilities, the salaries of those who have been employed to take care of the needs of the

Continued on Page 3

FROM THE EDITORS

Levi Sides

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GIVING THANKS AT THANKSGIVING

"Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise..." (Psalm 100:4).

Thanksgiving comes at the right time. It arrives near the end of the year - just as we begin to review the success and failures, the joys and sorrows of the previous twelve months.

Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday. Here's why.

First, it seems to blend together all we Americans hold precious and dear - without the sham and plastic mask of commercialism. Shopping centers jump from Halloween to Christmas. It's spooks to Santa...pumpkins to presents...orange and black to red and green. Except for grocery stores, merchants are mute when Thanksgiving rolls around.

Second, it highlights the home and family. Thanksgiving is synonymous with stuff that can be found only at home - Mom and Dad, kids and grandkids, delicious turkey dressing, pumpkin pie, homemade rolls, holding hands and praying before that special meal, and a touch football game in the backyard.

Third, it drips with national nostalgia. For me, even more so than the Fourth of July holiday. That holiday reminds us of a battle we won, giving us independence. This one takes us back to a simple slice of life over 350 years ago when our forefathers and foremothers real-

ized their dependence on God and on each other to survive. With Thanksgiving comes a surge of renewed patriotism, a quiet inner peace that whispers, I am proud to be an American.

Fourth, it turns our heads upward. Just the word "Thanksgiving" promotes the spirit of humility. Genuine gratitude to God for His mercy, His protection, His smile of favor, and His abundance. At this holiday, as at no other, we count our blessings and we run out of time before we exhaust the list. And best of all, life simplifies itself. At Thanksgiving we come back to the soil, the sun, the rain, and the goodness of God which combine their efforts to produce food and shelter for our bodies.

It is a time of quiet reflection upon the past and an annual reminder that God has, again, been so faithful. Thanksgiving is good for our roots...it deepens them and strengthens them and thickens them...making our trunks and limbs more secure in spite of the threatening gales of our times. The meal, the memories, the music Thanksgiving brings have a way of blocking out the gaunt giant of selfishness and ushering in the sincere spirit of gratitude, love, and joy.

May we ever give thanks at Thanksgiving.

THANKSGIVING

T is for the TENDER care He gives to us each day.

H is for the HELPING hands that guide us on our way.

A is for ADORING eyes that watch us at night.

N is for His NEVER-ENDING light.

K is for the KINDNESS He shows for you and me.

S is for His SUFFERING on the tree.

G is for His saving GRACE.

I is for the INSURANCE of a home with Him in heaven.

V is for His VICTORY over death.

I is for our INIQUITIES forgiven.

N is for His gentle NATURE.

G is for the GREATEST gift of all - Jesus Christ.

via. The Beacon

OH COME, LET US WORSHIP THE LORD!, *continued from Page 1*

congregation--me, in plurality.

And often I have been dismissed without ever once feeling myself emotionally prostrate before the great and awesome presence of *God*, without feeling surrounded and comforted in His continual outpouring of love, without feeling both humbled and exalted by the tremendous experience of *worship*. Most of my thinking throughout the scant hour was centered around *myself*, not God!

Yes, we live in physical bodies, and the physical world serves as a distraction from the spiritual. And, yes, certain prescribed 'acts' must be the framework of our worship. And yes, it is a simple matter for any prescribed list to become a line of empty rituals, if the unthinking Christian allows it to be so.

And this is my point! I think we have done that, in many cases. I am convinced that the traditions which have developed as our mode of 'worship' have actually hindered worship. Instead, they have been a means of Bible study, of personal edification, and even of spiritual entertainment.

Re-read those passages about worship. Do they sound like relaxed, laid-back, watch-the-clock, doze-a-little, me-centered experiences? Or would an honest survey of them convince us that true worship is adoration, requiring our best energy, our undivided attention, directed in reverence toward the glorious presence of God, an emotional and spiritual setting in which it would be near-blasphemous to be watching the clock?

What could we do, differently, yet within the framework of the truths God has given us as guidelines, so that the time we spend together on Sundays, as His children, is actually worship?

Risking replacing one set of traditions for what might in time become only another traditional formula, I believe these suggestions would better inspire me to actually *worship*:

Always...always...always, the men leading the parts of worship must keep their minds and the minds of the congregation focused on the fact that everything we say and do is to honor, glorify, and praise God. While participants will be strengthened by worship and will benefit in many ways, this time is devoted to *adoration of God*, not primarily to *self edification*. That kind of study should, in large part, be reserved for the Bible study periods.

1. I should begin preparing for worship by (a) being sure to get enough rest Saturday night, (b) waking early enough Sunday morning to make unhurried preparations to go to the building, and (c) getting there early enough to set my mind in the proper channels for worship. These optimums may not always be possible, but they should be my goals.

2. Arriving at the building, all 'visiting' should be

done outside the auditorium. Entrance into that area should signal the beginning of the actual attitude of being in God's presence in corporate worship.

3. While awaiting the beginning of the designated worship period, I should spend the time reading the Scriptures, praying, or meditating--concentrating my thinking very pointedly on the person of God.

4. Worship, itself:

A. The Godhead should be the focal point, throughout. Hymns should be selected to inspire each participant to sing from the depths of his very soul, words that praise, glorify, thank, and express our love for our God.

B. Prayers should also concentrate more on praise and thanksgiving than on self; however, great care should be taken to learn the specific concerns and needs of the individual Christians, before praying. Any area-wide, or national crisis should receive special attention, taking it sincerely to the Heavenly Father, who is the Lord of all, and asking Him to overrule according to His will. Prayers should perhaps be shorter, yet more frequently interspersed throughout the meeting, and dealing with specific needs, requests, and concerns, with some intervals of prayer being devoted entirely to praise. Prayers should be worded with sincerity, avoiding 'formula' phrases, and being sure that each thought is from the heart.

C. As Christians of the first century met on the first day of the week to commune with their Lord and the Father through the Supper, so this feast and all of its meanings should be the central part of today's worship. Appropriate Scriptures should be read, with accompanying explanations and encouragement, designed to remind and inspire the participants in their remembrance of Christ as well as in the examination of self.

D. Rather than have a 'sermon' which has largely deteriorated to a display of talent, ability, and entertainment, various ones of the men (either spontaneously or by pre-arrangement) should intersperse throughout the meeting, readings which would lead the participants to thoughts that glorify and worship God. Some commentary and words of exhortation might be given, but they should not take precedence over the Scriptures themselves.

E. Contributions should reflect an outpouring of individual and congregational love, in response to the inspirational period of worship. If our attention were focussed, as it should be, on the greatness of

OH COME, LET US WORSHIP THE LORD!, *continued from Page 3*

God and His love for the world, we should be motivated to help spread that truth to those who live in darkness.

Should we stand or sit or bow or what, as we worship? No rule is laid down, as such, in the Scriptures, but what we read there does serve as an example. Obviously, for much of the time it would be better to sit. In the Scriptures people were spoken of as 'standing' in the presence of God. But more prominently than any other posture, the Bible describes worshippers as bowing before God, even putting their faces to the ground. I am convinced from my own private worship at home, that human pride has designed our public worship periods, deliberately omitting this humbling posture. I am also convinced that we won't experience the type of adoration and glorification of God that Abraham, Abel, David, and others knew until we long to fall prostrate in His Presence.

How do the Scriptures themselves describe the setting of worship? By inspiration, the writer of Hebrews in 12:22-24, contrasting God's appearance to the children of Israel on Mount Sinai with the thunder and lightning, speaks of the assembly of the

church:

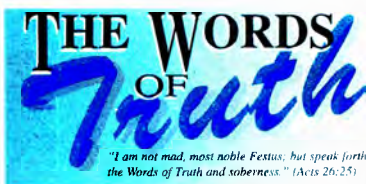
"But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel."

What an awesome assembly! Into what glorious realms we enter, when we presume to worship God! With what humility and soul-searching we should dare to join that throng! What an inspirational experience it should be for us each Lord's Day!

Following worship there should be a lengthy period of Bible study, divided into age groups. During this meeting, the preacher and/or elders would have opportunity to impact to the congregation the fruit of their own Bible study. Much of the 'teaching and admonishing one another' that has been the thrust of worship periods should be moved to the Bible class time, in order to concentrate more fully on the actual *worshipping* of God.

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the Words of Truth and soberness" (Acts 26:25).

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

**THINK ON THESE THINGS
DOES CHRIST OFFEND?
THEY HAD BEEN WITH JESUS -
Part 4 - Spiritual Maturity
BIBLICAL FAITH**

Vol. 35 No. 44

November 19, 1998

THINK ON THESE THINGS

Mike Yates

Recently I read an article printed in a bulletin from Lafayette, Indiana. It tells the story of a congregation of the Lord's body that has adopted four basic principles from the Bible that shaped both their mission and daily ministry.

First, they believe that we live in a mission field. We do not have to look to foreign fields, although to do so would not be wrong. The country we live in has removed itself so far from God that it is in desperate need of the gospel of Christ. Christians are a minority - only a fraction of the total population - and we must assume we will be "different," "distinct" and occasionally thought of as "odd." We need only look to our neighbors to find those who need to hear the story of Christ.

Second, they believe that it is the "ordinary church member" in their day-to-day interactions with their friends and neighbors who will make or break the credibility of the church. Living in a world that is Biblically illiterate and morally bankrupt, Christians are most effective statements for God's presence in the

world.

Third, they believe that ministry takes place primarily outside the walls of the church building. All the things that take place inside the church building - corporate worship, classes, meetings - are things meant to nourish and edify Christians to do their real work (spiritually, physically, emotionally) around them.

Fourth, they believe that the work of the church's elders and preachers is to prepare God's people for life with a faith that makes a difference. The work and focus of the church is not what the preachers and elders do, but what all members do as they live and work in the world. The role of appointed church leaders is to support, equip, prepare, outfit and provide for the spiritual strengthening of the soldiers who are to go out into the world to labor for the Lord.

To me, this approach seems simple, workable and scriptural. If you study carefully, you will see that the first century Christians were encouraged to apply these principles in spreading the gospel. Please consider these things.

DOES CHRIST OFFEND?

Johnny Ramsey

In Galatians 5:11 we read of "the offense of the cross." To some in Corinth nothing was as distasteful as the preaching of the crucified Savior. In Athens Paul was mocked for preaching the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 17:32). To be perfectly honest, Christ was a rock of offense and a stone of stumbling to many in the Roman Empire (Romans 9:33). Why did Jesus offend so many? He was despised in the region of the Gadarenes because the people there thought more of swine than souls (Mark 5). The Master offended the Pharisees because of His blunt rebuke of their traditions and customs (Matthew 15:7-12). There was even "division among the people because of Him" (John 7:43). The absolute authority of the Lord caused a sword of separation within some families (Matthew 10:37).

When Christ comes upon the stage of life the human scene must give attention to His claims. One cannot remain neutral in regard to the Man of Nazareth. Jesus plainly reminds us in Matthew 12:30 that men are either "for or against" Him.

We should love the cross of Christ! Jesus, our friend, went to Golgotha because of our sins (Galatians 1:4) and bore our iniquities there (1 Peter 2:24). To many the shadow of the cross is offensive, but sincere Christians glory only in the cross (Galatians 6:14).

He borrowed a room on His way to the tomb,
The Passover lamb to eat
They borrowed a cave for Him a grave

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FROM THE EDITORS

Chuck Webster

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THEY HAD BEEN WITH JESUS - Part 4 - Spiritual Maturity

Jesus often became very frustrated with the twelve men He had chosen as apostles. On several different occasions, He chastised them severely. It's interesting to note, however, that He didn't reprimand them for doctrinal errors, but rather for a lack of depth to their faith. The twelve apostles had, to a great extent, a one-track mind when they began following Jesus. They weren't very different from most Jews of that era. In fact, they had been trained since early childhood to look forward to this one thing. The thing they greatly anticipated was the Messiah's coming to establish His earthly kingdom. In their minds, He was going to reveal Himself in some extraordinary way, destroy Rome's sovereignty over them, restore their rightful place as a dominant world power, and reign on David's throne in Jerusalem. This was their dream, as well as that of most first-century Jews. Early in their ministry, the apostles thought on a very shallow level--they had not yet learned to search beneath the outward show of physical power into the inward nature of Christ's spiritual kingdom. For this shallowness Jesus chided them. But we'll soon find that as Jesus worked with them and spent time with them, their faith deepened. As we've pointed out throughout this series, time with Jesus will also change us. In this case, it will help our faith to mature past the superficial level to the deep, spiritual faith which God expects.

As we look at the development of the apostles' faith, we clearly see their emphasis on the physical. For example, James' and John's mother came to Jesus and asked, "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom" (Matthew 20:21). In her mind, if Jesus was going to be reigning in Jerusalem, she wanted (and James and John apparently agreed) her boys to be right up there with him! They certainly did not grasp Jesus' purpose for coming. On several different occasions, Jesus became frustrated with his shallow-thinking disciples. When the twelve couldn't cast out a demon, Jesus chastised them for their unbelief: "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?" (Matthew 17:17). On another occasion, Jesus tried to teach them a lesson about the "leaven" (teaching) of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Because they had forgotten to bring food into the ship, they thought He was referring to literal bread (Matthew 16:5-12). A

short while after Jesus had miraculously fed over 5,000 people, the disciples still had no idea how they were going to feed another hungry crowd (Matthew 15:33). Hadn't they learned anything at Jesus' previous miracle? Time and time again, we see the apostles demonstrating a lack of deep faith.

This fact, however, gives insight into one of the reasons Jesus spent over three years teaching the crowds. Certainly there were several purposes for Jesus' spending so much time traveling from town to town throughout Palestine, one being His desire to do miracles and give evidence of His deity. But a primary one must have been that of training His apostles for the work He was going to leave in their hands when He ascended to heaven. To eleven men he was entrusting the "treasure" of the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:7). For that reason, He needed to spend time with them, maturing and deepening their somewhat shallow faith. Slowly and patiently He brought His pupils along till He felt them mature enough to handle the burden of teaching the world.

Note their spiritual development: though the apostles' initial focus was on a physical kingdom, after their years with Jesus and their reception of the Holy Spirit, they no longer desired to be free from Rome; now they preached freedom from sin (Romans 6:7). They no longer believed in the power of the soldier's sword and shield; now they taught the significance of one's loins being "girt about with truth." They no longer carried a sword like the one Peter used to cut off Malchus' ear; now they were armed with the "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17). Spiritually, they carried the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation (Ephesians 6:14f). They preached a spiritual kingdom, the church of Christ, not a kingdom of this world (1 Thessalonians 2:12; Hebrews 12:28). Their faith had moved past the point where they thought only of the physical "here and now" and had moved to the point where they could think on a deeply spiritual level.

Aren't we often like the apostles were initially? We tend to focus on the externals--that which is superficial. Instead of viewing the church as the "eternal purpose" of God (Ephesians 3:11), we sometimes think of it in a shallow way, maybe as a sort of country club designed merely to serve as a gathering place where we associate with friends and enjoy ourselves. To many the church is simply a place to go, not a vital entity as the blood-bought

Continued on Page 3

They borrowed a winding sheet
But the crown that He wore
And the cross that He bore were His own
The cross was His own!

Are there any sadder words in the Bible than John 1:11? "He came unto his own but his own received him not" -- Does Christ offend you? Does the plain, direct entreaty of the gospel embarrass you? Rather than being offended in Jesus may God help us to always valiantly stand up for Him in the midst of a godless, decadent, crumbling world.

Jesus did not agree with everyone nor did He shun controversy. He had not come to earth to please men but to save them. In 1 Peter 2:21 we learn that we are to be like Him. What a tremendous responsibility! Some brethren, under the guise of humility, will not rebuke error or condemn sin or practice church discipline. The only aspect of the life of the Lord they seem to notice in the New Testament is that of tenderness. But in Romans 11:22 we learn also of the severity of the Lord.

Just as a gentle mother slaps hard on her baby to keep the child from choking so God chastens those whom He loves and scourges everyone He receives. We dare not pick and choose the characteristics we admire in Jesus; we must be like Him in every way. Each facet of the Divine One should challenge our attention.

What was Jesus really like? We all need to read again the Bible story lest we grope around the scaffolding of His life like blind men of Hindustan and never really get to the superstructure of divine revelation of the matter.

All things are new and I am rejoicing
Yet 'tis not I, Christ liveth in me.

Led by the Spirit's instruction in the Scriptures, we put off the old man of sin and we become a new creation in the Master (II Corinthians 5:17). As we "perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord" (II Corinthians 7:1), we disdain the beggarly elements of the world and strive daily to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Savior (II Peter 3:18). We will not "bite and devour one another" (Galatians 5:15), but cherish forever our relationship as members of the body of Christ. In fact, at least half of the works of the flesh referred to in 5:19-21 deal with attitudes and thoughts within our hearts that must be corrected if purity would prevail in the church of Christ!

Purer in heart, O God, help me to be
Teach me to do Thy will most lovingly;
Keep me from secret sin,
Reign Thou my soul within;
Purer in heart, Help me to be.

We willingly bear the stigma attached to following the Redeemer and emphasize spiritual matters rather than carnal points. The fickle Galatians desperately needed these admonitions and so do we today.

In the fulness of time God sent His Son (Galatians 4:4). May we benefit from such a wondrous plan by shaping our lives after such nobility.

Would you live for Jesus
And be always pure and good?
Would you walk with Him
Within the narrow road?
Would you have Him save you
So that you need never fall?
Let Him Have His Way With You!

THEY HAD BEEN WITH JESUS - Part 4 - Spiritual Maturity

Continued from Page 2

body of Christ that has been called out from the world to give glory to God (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 3:21). Some view the plan of salvation as nothing more than a series of five thoughtless steps, not the response that comes from a heart motivated by faith and prompted by love. Like some Christians of old, we "have need that one teach [us] again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat" (Hebrews 5:12).

Time with Jesus, though, does wonders with shallow faith. A new convert's somewhat superficial faith soon turns into a deep abiding trust, but only after he has spent time with the Lord. As He meditates on God's word and prays to the Father, he begins to move past the basic "principles" and on

to maturity (Hebrews 6:1). His once-shallow view of the church develops into the biblical view. His understanding of the obedience of faith, true worship, and the Christian life moves beyond the new-born stage and matures into one who is of "full age," who has his "senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14).

So...how's our faith? It's one thing for a new convert to have a babe's faith. It's quite another, however, when people have been Christians for many years and still haven't matured. The reason is quite clear: they haven't spent time with the Lord. Time with Him will mature and perfect us, just as it did with the small group of Jews who walked with Him some 2,000 years ago.

BIBLICAL FAITH

Mike Winkler

The biblical term “faith” conveys the ideas of: trusting, placing confidence in another or relying totally upon another. The importance and necessity of faith in the life of a Christian can not be over-emphasized. For example:

- * Without faith one cannot please God - Hebrews 11:6,
- * Without faith one cannot be saved - Mark 16:16,
- * Without faith one cannot live life victoriously - Romans 1:17.

Throughout the pages of the New Testament, inspiration identifies several “kinds” of faith Christians can possess. These include:

- * Little (small) Faith - Matthew 6:25-34; 8:23-27; 14:22-23; 16:5-12.
- * Weak (impotent) Faith - Romans 14:1; 1 Corinthians 8:9-13.
- * Shipwrecked Faith - 1 Timothy 1:19-20.

- * Tested Faith - James 1:20-24; 1 Peter 1:3-9.
- * Working Faith - Galatian 5:6; James 2:14-26.
- * Sincere Faith - 1 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 1:5.
- * Great Faith - Matthew 15:28.

During the ministry of Jesus, inspiration records that he “marveled” at the people only two times. It is interesting, helpful, and challenging to note at whom and why our Savior marveled.

- * Jesus marveled at a non-Jew because of the greatness of his faith - Matthew 8:10.
- * Jesus marveled at a group of Jews because of their lack of faith - Mark 6:1-6.

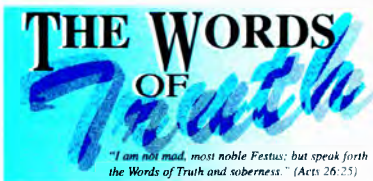
QUESTIONS:

Which faith best describes me as a Christian?

Does Jesus marvel at the greatness of my faith or at the lack of it?

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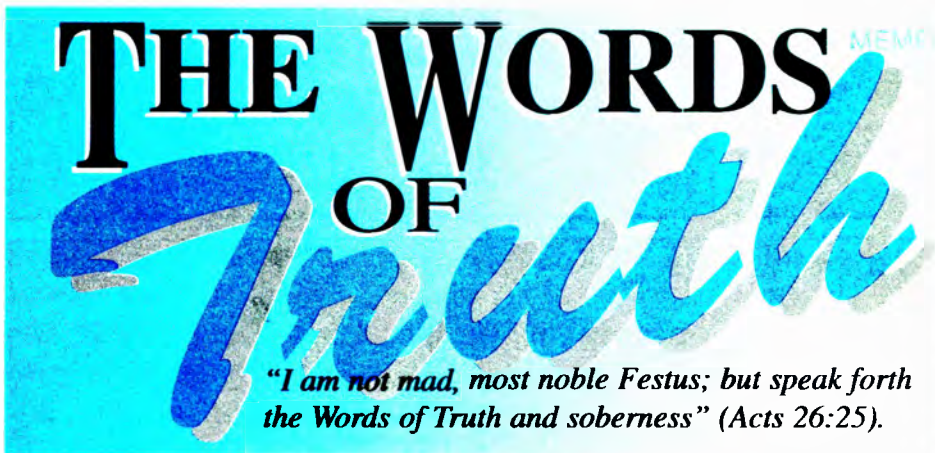
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Vol. 35 No. 45

November 26, 1998

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN
ELEVEN RULES TO HAPPINESS
ANOTHER SLAP AT THE BIBLE

ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN

Lennie Reagan

Paula Nielsen describes herself as “an open transsexual Christian, preaching the Gospel.” Paula was born Larry Nielsen and after a sex change operation she started a television ministry. “Sister Paula” (by her definition) believes that she can have a more effective ministry to people in our generation than the typical “straight” preacher using nothing more than the Gospel.

It is very difficult to imagine anything more incongruous or more profane than that concept. Yet, within the Lord’s church, there exists the same fundamental philosophy and strategy as “Sister Paula.” The notion that the church must become like the world to win the world has been a thorn in the flesh of the Lord’s church for a long time. This faulty concept has produced a new theology which gives room for a fluid and flexible view of authority and it also allows for such extremes as the “Sister Paula’s” of the world.

The goal of this article is not to address the symptoms of the disease; but to expose the faulty thinking which allows for departures from the faith. It is this attitude which is in direct opposition to God. This attitude seeks to destroy the distinctive nature of the church corporately and the child of God individually so we can become like the (denominational) “nations” around us. The possessor of this attitude advocates that if we are going to win the world we must break down the barriers between us.

But, is there any Biblical justification for that kind of thinking? Many affirm that there is and, oddly enough, point to the apostle Paul as someone who adapted the Gospel message to the tastes of his audience. They suggest that Paul was willing to shape his communications according to the needs of his audience in order to receive the response he sought. After all, the apostle did write, “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partakers thereof with you” (1 Corinthians 9:22-23). Is the apostle suggesting that the Gospel can be changed to accommodate the lifestyles and lusts of men in and out of the church?

Please know that there was one non-negotiable commodity in the life of Paul: the apostle was no people pleaser (Galatians 1:10). Paul did not amend his message to make people happy. He did not use methodology or language that catered to the lusts of his listeners. He was not willing to follow the pragmatic philosophy of present day preachers who please men with a pseudo-gospel. He was an apostle of Christ, not His public relations manager. Truth was something to be declared, not negotiated. The apostle refused to compromise with unbelievers and he was not willing to back down in the face of opposition.

So, what did Paul mean when he wrote, “I am made all things to all men...” (1 Corinthians 9:22)? Please take the time to read the words of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. As you read, you will find the very first sentence clearly identifies the intent of Paul’s philosophy. He is not describing his willingness to sacrifice the message; but, he is describing his willingness to sacrifice himself to preach the Gospel message. He would give up everything, even become a slave to all men if that would promote the spread of the Gospel.

In order that Paul “...might by all means save some...”, he was willing to give up all his rights and privileges, his freedom and ultimately his life. If it would spread the Gospel, Paul would claim no rights, make no demands and insist on no privileges. He was describing an attitude of personal sacrifice, not an attitude of compromise of the Word of truth.

How did Paul apply this principle?

1. To the Jews, he became a Jew. Paul was a Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin (Philippians 3:5). He was willing to subject himself to some of the Jewish customs. For example, in matters of eating meat offered to idols, he would abstain if it were going to cause someone else to sin. Was it to appease their pride or to affirm their Judaistic religion? Absolutely not! He was willing to sacrifice personal preferences and freedoms in order to declare the power and the purity of the Gospel.

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FROM THE EDITORS

Levi Sides

*Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
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ELEVEN RULES TO HAPPINESS

1. **LIVE A SIMPLE LIFE.** Be temperate in your habits. Avoid self-seeking and selfishness. Make simplicity the keynote of your daily plans. Simple things are best.

2. **SPEND LESS THAN YOU EARN.** This may be difficult but it pays big dividends. Keep out of debt. Cultivate frugality, prudence and self-denial. Avoid extravagance.

3. **THINK CONSTRUCTIVELY.** Train yourself to think clear and accurately. Store your mind with useful thoughts. Stand porter at the door of your mind.

4. **CULTIVATE A YIELDING DISPOSITION.** Resist the common tendency to want things your own way. Try to see the other person's point of view.

5. **BE GRATEFUL.** Begin the day with gratitude for our opportunities and blessings. Be glad for the privilege of life and work.

6. **RULE YOUR MOODS.** Cultivate a mental attitude of peace and good will.

7. **WORK WITH RIGHT MOTIVES.** The highest

purpose of your life should be to grow in spiritual grace and power.

8. **BE INTERESTED IN OTHERS.** Divert your mind from self-centeredness. In the degree that you give, serve, and help you will experience the by-product of happiness.

9. **LIVE IN A DAYLIGHT COMPARTMENT.** This means living one day at a time. Concentrate on your immediate task. Make the most of today for it is all you have.

10. **HAVE A HOBBY.** Nature study, walking, gardening, music, golfing, carpentry, stamp collecting, sketching, voice culture, foreign language, books, photography, social service, public speaking, travel, authorship, are samples. Cultivate an avocation to which you can turn for diversion and relaxation.

11. **KEEP CLOSE TO GOD.** True and enduring happiness depends on close alliance with Him. It is your privilege to share His thoughts for your spiritual nourishment, and to have a constant assurance of divine protection and guidance.

ANOTHER SLAP AT THE BIBLE

Bobby Duncan

During the summer a series of articles appeared in a certain church bulletin. This series was entitled, "Are you 'Gifted' or Not?" In this series it was urged that every member of the church has a spiritual gift. I would find no fault in this, if the author meant that each one has a certain ability or some certain abilities. But that is not what he meant, for he himself wrote:

A spiritual gift is, in fact, a **supernatural capacity** for service in God's Kingdom. Many equate such gifts with the word *ability*. But a spiritual gift is really not an ability...So then, a spiritual gift is a supernatural capacity, graciously given us by the Lord at the time of

our baptism, enabling us to develop the supernatural ability through which the Holy Spirit is able to minister to our fellow man, for the purpose of accomplishing His work through you.

The author further states: "Another spiritual gift which God provides to some within His Body is the gift of prophecy." He then tells us what that gift accomplishes:

The gift of prophecy is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to understand and communicate a message of God, as prescribed in His Word.

Continued on Page 3

They have the ability to compare societal standards with those of eternal importance and they reveal the discrepancies to God's people.

We have often said that as long as people believe the Bible to be the all-sufficient and inerrant word of God, it will be difficult to lead them away from the truth and into error. Consequently, when a teacher of error comes along, one of the first things he must do is attack the Bible. The Roman Catholic has become convinced that the Bible is authoritative only as it is interpreted by Catholic scholars, and that it must be understood in the light of Catholic tradition. The Mormon has become convinced that the Bible is not enough; he must also have the writings of Joseph Smith. In the denominational world one's dreams, his feelings, his hunches, and his experiences are believed to be God's way of speaking to him. Some even claim God speaks to them directly, or that the Holy Spirit directly leads them. Practically none of those in religious error will accept the fact that the Bible, as it is, is perfectly adapted to man, as he is.

This doctrine that some today have the supernatural gift of prophecy, along with the author's definition thereof, is another slap at the all-sufficiency of the Bible. It says that not all can understand God's message. It is up to those who have the gift of prophecy to "understand and communicate" God's message. Not all can tell the difference between "societal standards" and "those of eternal importance." It is up to those who have the gift of prophecy to "reveal the discrepancies to God's people."

In writing about the cessation of supernatural gifts, the apostle Paul specifically mentioned the gift of prophecy, and said that it would fail (I Corinthians 13:8). The Greek word *katargeo* 'fail' is defined by Thayer as meaning to "cease, pass away, be done away" (Page 336). This would take place "when that which is perfect" was come--a clear reference to the perfection of the New Testament (I Corinthians 13:10). 2 Timothy 3:16-17 tells us clearly that the scriptures will thoroughly furnish us unto every good work. 2 Peter 1:3 declares that we have been given "all things that pertain unto life and godliness." Jude 3 makes it clear that the faith has been delivered once for all. Such being the case, then the gift of prophecy has ceased, passed away, been done away. To say Christians today have the gift of prophecy is to declare that God's revelation to man is not complete.

In Ephesians 3:4 Paul referred to the things he had written by inspiration, and said: "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." Notice he did not say: "You will need someone with the gift of prophecy to understand what I wrote and communicate the message to you." Two chapters later we find the exhortation: "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Ephesians 5:17). Could those to whom Paul wrote understand the will of the Lord? Or did they have to have someone with the gift of prophecy to "compare societal standards with those of eternal importance" and then "reveal the discrepancies to God's people"?

I would not be at all surprised to find an article such as the one we are here reviewing in some Pentecostal publication. It advocates the old Pentecostal error in clear fashion: (1) that supernatural gifts continue throughout the Christian dispensation, and (2) that one must have some supernatural enlightenment in order to understand the written word of God. Both of these positions attack the perfection and the all-sufficiency of the written word. But remember what we said earlier: "As long as people believe the Bible to be the all-sufficient and inerrant word of God, it will be difficult to lead them away from the truth and into error." When one begins to advocate some theory that slaps at the all-sufficiency and inerrancy of the Bible, it is because his theory is contrary to the teaching of the Bible.

The last sentence in the article we are reviewing makes the following offer: "If interested in learning more...or to validate if you have the gift of **prophecy**, please call me." Can you imagine that? One may have a supernatural gift, even the gift of prophecy, and it not be valid. Oh, but that's no problem. All he has to do is call the man who wrote the article, and he will validate it.

One last thought: When we expose error, we are often charged with jealousy or some other ulterior motive. Such a charge is a ploy to turn attention away from the error. If my motive for exposing error were an improper one, then I would be sinning in so doing. I do not believe my motives are unholy. Even if they were, that would not change the fact that what I have written is the truth. The article I have here reviewed is filled with error, and it is the kind of error that undergirds every denominational body in the world. This kind of error needs to be exposed.

We can observe a practice of this principle in the circumcision of Timothy and Paul's refusal to have Titus circumcised. As Timothy's mother was a Jewess, Timothy was circumcised because it was demanded by the Jews as a matter of obedience to the law of Moses (Galatians 2:3-5). If the custom or ritual did not violate nor bind the Christian, it was nothing; but, if it did, Paul refused compliance.

2. To the Gentiles, Paul became a Gentile. He is not suggesting that he became lawless to please the despisers of true righteousness; but, he became as one without law in the ritual or ceremonial sense. When he was with the Gentiles he dropped his non-moral Jewish traditions and he followed Gentile customs and culture insofar as it did not conflict with the law of Christ. This is not to suggest that Paul violated his conscience. Note Paul's view of the matter: "But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat, are we the worse" (1 Corinthians 8:8).

3. To the weak, Paul became the weak. Just who are the weak? The weak are the immature believers who do not understand their Christian liberty. For example, some young Christians, just coming out of Judaism, may have felt as if some things were still obligatory. Perhaps, on the other hand, Gentiles, who were saved from idolatry, clung to old superstitions or refused to eat meat offered to idols. When Paul was with the weaker brethren he was careful not to offend or in any way ridicule a weaker brother.

Paul understood the difference in condescension and compromise. To compromise is to set aside an essential truth and thereby weaken or change the

Gospel, which Paul was never willing to do. Yet, he was willing to set aside his personal, optional liberty to avoid needless offenses to people's consciences.

The question which faces us is how does this almost 2,000-year-old principle affect our lives today? The extreme is that many preachers and elderships have forfeited the distinctive nature and message of the Lord's church in order to make for themselves a following and to do that they must tickle the ears of the masses.

But, if you will remember, that is not our purpose in this article. We seek to address the faulty thinking which leads to this extreme departure from the truth. It is this thinking which is revealed in the lives of many who appear to care for their opinion rather than God's opinion. People who are so engrossed in trying to please themselves they have forgotten their first duty is to please God. When we seek to satisfy self rather than to serve God in our obligations and commitments as Christians; when we justify worldly behavior and allow worldly influence to take up residence in our home and in our heart; when we fail to read, study, and apply the Word of God, we have become partakers of this faulty thinking which despises the authority of God.

Yes, this thinking will lead to greater and greater departures from the faith and before long the "sister Paula's" will be lining up at a congregation near you to regurgitate their putrid filth. But do not be deceived – those who trade the authority of God for selfishness, laziness, strife, and indifference might as well spit in the face of God.

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness" (Acts 26:25).*

Vol. 35 No. 46

December 3, 1998

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

**RIGHT UNDER YOUR NOSE
THEY HAD BEEN WITH JESUS
Part 5 of 5
WAS JESUS THE SON OF GOD?
HEARTFELT WORSHIP**

RIGHT UNDER YOUR NOSE

Wade L. Webster

Probably all of us have heard someone refer to something that was "right under his nose." Or, if you grew up in the country like I did, you probably heard someone say, "If that had been a snake, it would have bitten you." These statements and similar statements reveal that we often miss that which is right before our eyes. An old Eastern parable entitled "The Wealth Is Nearer to You Than You Think," relates the story of a rich merchant who took a journey to a distant land. As the businessman travelled, he met a stranger who wanted to travel with him. Although the merchant was glad to have a companion, he was also fearful of the intentions of the stranger. He was afraid that the stranger would steal the treasures which he had brought along on the journey. Each night when it was time to wash up, he allowed the stranger to go first so that he could hide his jewels. The ingenious hiding place of the rich man's treasures was beneath the stranger's pillow. When the merchant would take a bath, the stranger would search through the merchant's baggage looking for the riches. Although the stranger knew that the merchant had a bag of jewels, and that the merchant did not take them with him when he went to bathe, the stranger could not find the riches. Eventually, the day came for the merchant to part company with the stranger. However, before the two parted company, the businessman revealed the secret hiding place to the thief. The wealth was nearer to him than he thought. In like manner, many individuals today miss spiritual treasures which are right under their noses.

The Church

Many individuals miss the church which is right under their noses. The ONE church that we

read about in the New Testament is right here in this community (Ephesians 1:22-23; Ephesians 4:4; Colossians 1:18). In fact, we as Christians are members of it. The church of which we are members was built at the right time (during the days of the Roman kings - Daniel 2:44), at the right place (Jerusalem - Isaiah 2:1-2), and by the right person (Christ - Matthew 16:18). The church of which we are members teaches the same plan of salvation and engages in the same acts of worship as the church that is found in the Bible (Acts 2). Although the church is in this community, many people overlook it. In fact, there are those on every side of our building who are not yet members of the church. Many of those that we know are looking everywhere for "the church" and yet they are missing it. It is right under their noses but they have not found it.

The Truth

Many individuals miss the truth which is right under their noses. Contrary to the relativistic contentions, truth is in the world today. Jesus told men that they could know the truth and that it would set them free (John 8:32). Before leaving the earth, He told His disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth" (John 17:17). The word of God serves as a ruler to help us to know what is right and what is wrong (Philippians 3:16). In fact, we have been given "all truth" (John 16:13; 2 Peter 1:3; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Revelation 22:18-19). In spite of the fact that the truth is readily accessible to men today, many men have missed it. Although God has told men what to do in order to be saved, they continue to leave undone the things that He has commanded. For example, many emphasize the essentiality of faith

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FROM THE EDITORS

Chuck Webster

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THEY HAD BEEN WITH JESUS Part 5 of 5

During the last few weeks, we've emphasized the fact that time with Jesus makes drastic changes in those who experience it. We noticed how a group of uneducated, untrained men matured into deeply spiritual and powerful proclaimers of the gospel of Christ after spending a little over three years with the Lord. We observed how they developed into men who deeply loved the lost, cared little for things of this world, sought to be humble servants, and had a deep, spiritual faith. All this happened after they spent time with the Lord.

But, we might ask, since it is impossible for us literally to walk with Jesus and hear Him speak as the apostles did, how can we spend time with Him today? The answer is really very simple. Here's how we, like the apostles, can "be with Jesus":

Listen to Jesus by meditating on His word. It certainly must have been wonderful to have heard the intonation in Jesus' voice as He preached the immortal sermon recorded in Matthew 5-7. How enlightening it must have been to have heard the frustration in His voice as He castigated the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy (Matthew 23)! It must have left an indelible impression on the minds of the apostles as they heard their Lord pray for them just before He was delivered up to be crucified (John 17). These opportunities, however, are no longer available. Jesus doesn't speak audibly to His disciples today. But that doesn't mean that we can't hear Him speak.

Jesus saw the need for His teachings to be preserved so that subsequent generations could be blessed by them. On the night before His death, He told the disciples that He would soon go away, but after His departure He would send the Comforter, who would reprove the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:7-11). Because the apostles were fallible and had imperfect memories, the Holy Spirit would also guide them into all truth (John 16:13). That prophecy was fulfilled in Acts 2 as the Holy Spirit fell upon the twelve and guided them as they preached to the Pentecost crowd. This inspiration continued throughout the apostles' ministry during the first century.

But what about ensuing generations of people? How could they hear the inspired word of God? So that people wouldn't need to depend on unstable oral traditions, God saw fit to put the gospel in permanent form by inspiring the apostles and others during the first century to put in writing the "treasure" of the gospel. Hence, four inspired writers gave their unique view of Jesus' life and teachings. Luke wrote

a history of the early church. Paul corresponded with early churches and individuals. God used Peter, James, and Jude to write early letters. Finally, inspiration came to a close with John's apocalyptic treatise. But through it all, the Holy Spirit was working through fallible men to produce an inerrant record of God's word. The result? The New Testament. And through it Jesus' message still speaks clearly to men and women today.

Though we can't audibly hear Jesus' speaking today, it is vital that we listen to His voice. We do so by spending time meditating on His inspired word. Then we, like trees planted by the rivers of water, will bring forth spiritual fruit (Psalm 1:1-3; Galatians 5:22,23). Jesus still speaks to us today; but we must open the Bible to hear His voice.

Talk to God through prayer. It must have been wonderful to have been able to speak face to face with Jesus...to ask Him particular questions. Though we can't talk to Him in the way the apostles could, it is still possible for us to spend time with Him in this way. Jesus clearly taught that prayer was to be offered to God the Father, not to Him or the Holy Spirit. When the apostles asked Him to teach them to pray, He instructed them to pray: "Our Father which art in heaven,..." (Matthew 6:9). He told them several times on the night before He died to pray to the Father in His name (John 14:13,14; 15:16; 16:23-26). Christians pray to the Father through Jesus.

While we're talking to the Father, we're spending time with the Godhead. Every minute we spend pouring our hearts out to God is a minute He can use to mold us into the kind of people He wants us to be. The more we subject our minds, hearts, and spirits to Him in prayer, the more our lives will also become submissive toward Him. As we spend time adoring Him in prayer, we become more and more like the object of our adoration. Prayer is certainly more than making requests to God. It is a submissive act of adoration on our part toward the One who alone deserves praise and honor.

We each have 168 hours every week. Portions of that time must clearly be spent working, resting, and doing other necessary activities. What are we doing with the rest of our time? If we are ever going to become more like Jesus, we must be willing to devote a significant amount of time with Him--listening to His word and talking to the Father through Him. Make a commitment in your life to spend more time with the Lord. It made eternal differences in the apostles...and so it will with us.

but fail to emphasize the essentiality of baptism (Acts 9:6; 22:16). Although truth is right under their noses, many men miss it.

The Happiness

Many individuals miss the happiness which is right under their noses. It is very clear that God wants us to be happy. In fact, He has given us "richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17). Of course, the greatest gift that God gave men to ensure their joy was the gift of His Son. Jesus came and delivered truth to men that their "joy might be full" (John 15:11). As Christians, we have found happiness in the Lord (Philippians 4:4). In spite of the fact that happiness is acces-

sible to all today, many men remain unhappy. Men are unhappy because they look for it everywhere except right under their noses. They look to material goods, personal accomplishments, and fleshly lusts instead of to the Lord and His word. They miss that which is right under their noses.

Certainly, all of us would agree that the church, the truth, and happiness are too important to overlook. Although it is a great tragedy for anyone to be lost, it seems even more tragic for someone to be lost with salvation so near at hand. May we help our friends, neighbors, co-workers, and family members to find the treasures which are right under their noses.

WAS JESUS THE SON OF GOD?

Holger Neubauer

Modernists have denied that Jesus is God and have attempted to strip our Lord of His authority as God. In John Hick's book *The Myth of God Incarnate*, time and time again he denies Jesus' claim to deity. The miracles of Jesus that are so wonderfully recorded in the gospel accounts are denied by pseudo-intellectuals whose clamour can be heard in almost all of our nation's higher institutions of learning. However, the evidence of verbal and plenary inspiration of the Bible still remains for those who will honestly look into the word of God.

John 20:30,31 instructs us that the recorded miracles are to produce belief that men might be saved. Although the skeptics claim that the miracles of the Bible can't be proven, the evidence points to the truthfulness of the gospel records. The miracles recorded in the gospel accounts are never silly or without distinct purpose. Jesus never called the birds of heaven to recite the Ten Commandments. He never ordered the rodents out of town or demanded the gnats and mosquitoes to quit biting. Nothing in the gospel records makes us ashamed or embarrassed.

Miracles of the gospel accounts do not cater to human curiosity. They possess marvelous restraint in their recording. If miracles were fabricated, why bother in saying that Jesus fed multitudes with a few loaves and fishes, when it is more remarkable to say He created them from nothing?

The miracles do not become more frequent with time. Mark, which may be the earliest gospel record, records more miracles than John.

The miracles performed by Jesus could be verified by the senses. He performed miracles in front of many witnesses (John 18:20; Acts 26:26).

The miracles of Jesus are not duplicated by mod-

ern science. You do not find Jesus racing through Jerusalem on a horseless chariot at forty m.p.h. Many would say He simply beat Henry Ford to the drawing board. You do not see Jesus projecting His voice in another province, for someone would no doubt say that Jesus understood a principle that Alexander Graham Bell would later discover. The miracles of Jesus simply have stood the test of time.

The miracles of Jesus produced faith in men that witnessed them. Many of them died rather than recant Jesus as the Christ whom He claimed to be. The miracles of Jesus moved Peter to say for the disciples, "And we believe and are sure that thou art the Son of the living God" (John 6:68).

Those that affirmed that Jesus was the Christ were either inspired men, bad uninspired men, or crazy uninspired men. They certainly were not good uninspired men, for good men do not lie and the men who wrote the Bible claimed that God was working through them (2 Timothy 3:16,17; 1 Peter 1:20,21). They were not bad uninspired men, for they gained no social status (1 Corinthians 4:13), no wealth (1 Corinthians 9:15), and many of them were martyred. Bad men do not write about justice, virtue, love, moral purity and then die willingly for these principles. Neither were these men crazy, for the Bible is too profound a book for any to suggest that men who wrote the Bible were beside themselves. Neither good uninspired men, bad uninspired men, or crazy uninspired men wrote the Bible. Hence, it was men who were inspired of God that wrote down the will of Jehovah God. The men who recorded the miracles of Jesus wrote with historical accuracy, clarity of purpose and without contradiction so that men might believe Jesus is Lord of lords and King of kings and receive the grace of redemption.

HEARTFELT WORSHIP

Garvis Semore

A recent cartoon pictured a preacher standing behind the podium. His fists were clinched. His eyes were glazed over. There was a snarl on his mouth. As he began his evening lesson he grumbled these words: "I trust that your hearts are keenly focused on our worship this evening, and not on the Lions' stinking loss to the Bears this afternoon on that lousy holding penalty call by the refs with 1:15 to go in the game!"

In the words of our teenagers, have you "been there and done that?" Most of us can tell of times when we attended a worship service and left not having really worshipped. We may assign lots of blame for our lack of worship and attempt to make it someone else's fault. The truth is, if we fail to worship properly and have the right attitude about our worship we'd better take a look inside.

The Psalmist proclaimed, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD" (Psalm 122:1). When was the last time that you had that attitude? When was the last time you woke up Sunday morning excited because you had the opportunity to assemble with your brethren and worship God? Or midway through your Wednesday you took a breath of fresh air because you remembered that tonight

was Bible Study night?

The Samaritan woman of John 4 was interested in the place worship should take place. Jesus would teach, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Worship is dependent upon our heart...not on the physical location.

When we walk into a building ready to "worship" and have the attitude depicted in the cartoon it is hard to place the blame on someone else for your failure to "get anything out of worship." The lighting and temperature can be perfect. The pews can be extra soft. The singing can sound as if it is straight from heaven. The sermon can be delivered by the most eloquent of speakers. If my heart, my attitude is not right my worship will be meaningless.

The next time you "get ready" for worship do more than put on a tie or a skirt. Make sure that you dress your heart. Get it ready. Adjust your thinking and your attitude. Rejoice with the Psalmist that you have this grand opportunity. Little things won't matter as much. You'll leave uplifted. God will be glorified. You will have truly worshipped God in spirit and in truth. You will have experienced heartfelt worship.

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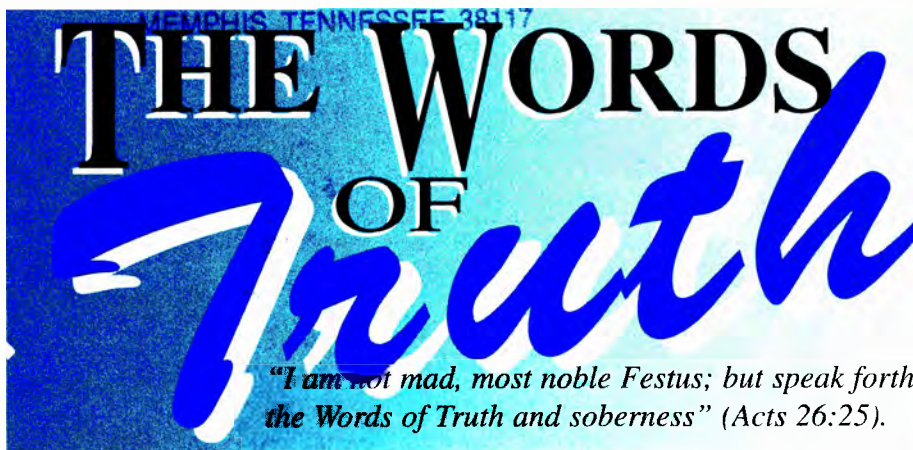
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Vol. 35 No. 47

December 10, 1998

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

**THE LOVE OF HEAVEN
WAS JESUS BORN ON
DECEMBER 25?
A PILGRIMAGE
SINS COMMITTED IN THE
CHURCH PEW
SORROW OVER SIN**

THE LOVE OF HEAVEN

Johnny Ramsey

In a dog-eat-dog world of violence and anarchy it is very refreshing to consider the loving nature of genuine brotherly love to be found in Christianity. Rebellion and anarchy, frenzy and hatred, characterize society in the last decade of this century. However, in the midst of such hellish behavior can be found a quiet and charitable people known as Christians. The Psalmist blessed us with the salient message of Psalm 133:1: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

The brilliant book of I John, in five sterling chapters, goes into depth to instruct us on the value of genuine concern and caring for one another in the divine realm. In fact, the source of all legitimate compassion and empathy is the gracious, benevolent love God has conveyed unto us. I John 4:19 tells us: "We love because He first loved us!" Love truly is the golden chain that binds our hearts together in a relationship that stuns the nonchalant world we live in. Psalm 119:63 challenges our attention: "I am a companion of all them that fear Thee and those who keep Thy precepts."

In a vivid discussion of the body of Christ, and the various members that make up that spiritual arrangement, Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, reminds servants of God to mesh their talents into the church that glorifies God (I Corinthians 12). Each one is vitally important and equally necessary to the proper function of the kingdom of the Lord. There is never, in the Bible, a concept of clergy and laity. All stand on level ground at the foot of the cross. In fact, to be great in heaven's divine plan we must be servants (Mark 10:45; Luke 14:11). Just as God loved us when we were unlovable (Romans 5:8) so we manifest this trait

as we esteem others better than self (Romans 12:10). Brotherly love is the badge of discipleship (John 13:34-35) and portrays to the world the essence of Christianity. A proverbial statement of the first century was: "See how the Christians love one another..." It should ever be so whatever the century of circumstance. In Romans 15:6 we have this magnificent decree: "With one mind and one mouth glorify God."

The Corinthian brethren were urged to follow the edict of Jesus in John 17 concerning oneness of purpose and singularity of devotion and loyalty in I Corinthians 1:10ff:

- (a) All speak the same things
- (b) Be of same mind and judgment
- (c) That there be no divisions among you

What a challenge for brethren today!

A factious, argumentative and hateful spirit often pervades the atmosphere of congregations. Some preachers seem to delight in stirring up strife everywhere they go. In Proverbs, chapter six, we read of seven things God hates and abominates. Those who are guilty of causing enmity among brethren and using their words to produce bitterness head the list of such matters. It is a serious breach of divine ethics to damage the richness of brotherly love and compassion. Diotrophes of 3 John had a hateful disposition toward other members of the body of Christ, but Gaius, in the same one-chapter epistle, was a servant of the Savior who manifested genuine concern and hospitality. In the last chapter of I Corinthians we read of a household of gracious Christians who "addicted themselves" to the

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FROM THE EDITORS

Levi Sides

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WAS JESUS BORN ON DECEMBER 25?

"Remember Christ our Savior was born on Christmas Day..." So go the words to an old and oft-sung carol of this holiday season. Was Jesus born on December 25?

The Bible nowhere gives an indication as to the day, month, or year of the birth of Christ. Neither is there any requirement that the birth of the Lord be celebrated as a holy day. The death, burial, and resurrection of the Savior and not his birth are the events of special importance to Christians (I Corinthians 15:1-4) and are to be commemorated not annually but on the first day of every week (I Corinthians 11:23-26; Acts 20:7).

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1967 ed.) reflects the consensus of modern scholarship that there is no credible historical evidence of the observance of December 25 as the date of Christ's birth before A.D. 336. Why was this date chosen? "This was the date of a pagan festival in Rome, chosen in A.D. 274 as the birthday of the unconquered sun (*natalis solis invicti*), which at the winter solstice begins again to show an increase of light. At some point before A.D. 336 the church at Rome established the commemoration of the birthday of Christ, the Sun of righteousness, on this same date" (*Encyclopedia Britannica* V, 704)

What attitude, then, shall a Christian take toward Christmas? He will certainly refuse to be bound by

human religious custom which demands that December 25 be held as a "holy day" on which he must engage in some religious ceremony or "mass" (from which the word derives: Christ plus mass equal Christmas). He should teach his children about this matter so they understand the difference in authoritative teachings of the Scripture and human religious custom.

Having said this, I would hasten to say that one need not go to the opposite extreme and think that any concession to this holiday season is sinful. There is no day of the year on which it is inappropriate to praise God for the sending of His Son among men. It is still encouraging to note that our world, as sinful as it is, still has a holiday on its calendar which recognizes the importance of Jesus Christ and his entry into the flesh. Whatever religious devotions a Christian may choose to engage in on this day which are right and edifying within themselves are matters of liberty for him to decide. Only let him avoid insisting that all others must do as he does. (Romans 14:5-6) The gift giving, family togetherness, and big meals of the Christmas season are joys that we should share with appropriate thanksgiving--as at any time of year!

Understand the facts about December 25. Observe it as you deem expedient. Have a Merry Christmas!

A PILGRIMAGE

John Gipson

As a young man I couldn't understand why my esteemed teacher Frank Pack would drive hundreds of miles to Memphis, Tennessee, for one purpose alone--to visit the grave-site of his father and mother. Perhaps only those who are older understand such things.

In the realm of the spirit, and imagination, I make my way to the grave of a friend. I can see his name carved on the stone. I note the year of his birth and the year of his death. I see the inscription, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," and add my amen. Heaviness settles upon me as a fog that blankets the earth before sunrise. (He loved cold, rainy, foggy days).

But more is there than sorrow. The tomb becomes an open page. *There* are the facts of the past; *there* the truth of his life; *there* the backward

reaches in which I can lose myself. I wander through the old years gathering laughter and strength along the way. He confirms my faith in Christ. He challenges me not only to better preaching, but to more active service and dedication. He reminds me that I am a stranger and pilgrim. He says, "The night cometh."

Knowledge, on the wings of experience, has brushed me, jostled me, upset and enlightened me. *There* illumination blazes to its zenith. *There* I draw deep breaths and sigh. *There* I live again days that are past. *There* I give thanks--both for the past and the future.

I turn to leave--knowing the final chapter has not yet been written. God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power (I Corinthians 6: 14)!

benevolence and loving-kindness other Christians needed so desperately in a pagan society. Such action makes people “fellowhelpers to the truth” (3 John 8). In fact, the absence of such practical exercise of hospitality prompted this demanding statement of 1 John 3:17. “How dwells the love of God in you?”

The life of brotherly love is a blessing beyond measures to those who practice such, as well as to the benefactors of such matchless empathy. In 2 Corinthian 8:5 and 8:9 we see the beauty of giv-

ing and the heart back of such generosity. Out of deep poverty the Macedonians begged Paul to allow them to give to the collection for the poor saints in Judea. The Bible tells us that **they first gave themselves** unto the Lord’s word. God so **loved...He gave...is** the vibrant message of John 3:16. In 8:9 of 2 Corinthians we learn the essence of true love in the wholesome nature of the gift of our Redeemer. He was willing to leave the riches of heaven to become poor for our sake that our spiritual poverty could be erased! Praise God for such hope.

SINS COMMITTED IN THE CHURCH PEW

Allen Webster

We usually think of sins being committed in some isolated spot under the cover of darkness; perhaps in the privacy of one’s home or in a dimly-lit tavern. But, sins committed in a *church pew*? During worship? Yes, consider these:

INSINCERITY. Though worship is done in a crowded auditorium, it is individual in nature. Others cannot worship for me. Worship is accepted or rejected based on the worshipper’s heart condition. The fellow sitting beside me can sing the same words I do, and his worship be accepted and mine rejected. Why? Because his came from the root of his heart and mine from the roof of my mouth.

God demands sincerity of worshippers. “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father *in spirit* and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him *in spirit* and in truth” (John 4:23-24). *In spirit* means “with the proper attitude.”

It is possible to be insincere during prayer. Miracles have ceased (1 Corinthians 13:8-10), but, for illustration’s sake, consider what might happen if God supernaturally answered some of our requests. Those who never return on Sunday nights pray “Bring us back at the next appointed time.” What if the Lord literally did that? Just when he got comfortable in the easy chair to watch a favorite show, the Lord picked him up and literally “brought him back at the next appointed time.” Others pray, “Wear us out in Thy service” when they have not lifted a finger in church work in years. Insincerity!

We can be insincere during singing. Consider singing: *All to Jesus I Surrender* when we are unwilling to give up a pet sin; *I Love to Tell the Story* when I am ashamed to invite my neighbor to worship; *If Jesus Goes With Me, I’ll Go*, when I would be embarrassed if He did; *Tell Me the Old, Old Story* while I hang on every word, when I complain if the lesson goes over five minutes; and *Blest Be the Tie That Binds* while I hold a grudge against my brother.

INATTENTION. If during prayers or preaching, my mind wanders to the lunch table or my Monday business appointment, then I am not worshipping acceptably. During the Lord’s Supper, we must remember His sacrifice (1 Corinthians 11:24, 25). We must keep our minds on what is taking place, otherwise we offer up vain worship (cf. Mark. 7:7-9).

INADEQUATE GIVING. We can sin when the plate is passed. It would be wrong to steal from the basket, but it is just as sinful to give \$20 when we should give \$50. “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation” (Malachi 3:8-9). The Jews were not stealing from the temple, they were just short changing God when it came sacrifice time. How many today are giving two or three percent when they should be giving ten or twelve?

Let’s pay close attention to our worship lest we be charged with sins while sitting in the pew.

SORROW OVER SIN

Duane Patton

God's heart breaks each time His children go astray. Yet, "through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not" (Lamentations 3:22). The Lord cannot look upon sin (Habakkuk 1:13), yet He so desires to embrace His own beloved children. His compassion and justice meet in diving cadence as He weeps over sin-sick people (Hosea 11:4, 8)! The sin of forgetting the Lord broke God's heart (Jeremiah 3:19-21); and breaks it still!

Jeremiah lamented: "My eyes fail with tears, my heart is troubled; my bile is poured on the ground because of the destruction of the daughter of my people..." (Lamentations 2:11). Sick over the sin of his own people, Jeremiah cries out: "Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by...?" (Lamentations 1:12). For they became calloused at the effects of sin, still Jeremiah wept over the "princess among the provinces" (Lamentations 1:1).

Do we sorrow as we ought? Or do we "no longer blush" at sin (Jeremiah 6:15; 8:12)? Perhaps we have become "accustomed to do evil" as was Judah just before being carried away into Babylonian captivity (Jeremiah 13:23). Are we also "dull-hearted, without knowledge" (Jeremiah 10:14)? Sin separates men from the Lord; it destroys the soul! Let us weep as did our Lord over sin-sick Judah; repent of our wickedness, and with renewed fervor for the Lord and His Christ "Seek and save that which is lost" (Luke 19:10) lest we be consumed (Lamentations 5:21f.)!

"Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22). God's heart was broken over His virgin daughter Jerusalem. Her sins consumed her; she literally destroyed herself out of God's hand (Jeremiah 15:6). Even so much that the weeping prophet lamented: "You have covered yourself with a cloud, that prayer

should not pass through" (Lamentations 3:44). The tragedy of their sin is found in this sad refrain: "...I have taken away my peace from this people" says the Lord, "loving kindness and mercies...Your fathers have forsaken me...and you have done worse than your fathers..." (Jeremiah 16:5, 11,12). "I am weary of relenting!" (Jeremiah 15:6; *emph. Mine-D.P.*).

Jeremiah bore the brunt of Judah's transgression in his sorrow. For he was commanded not to marry, was rejected by his own, afflicted and imprisoned; therefore he exclaimed in great sorrow: "I sat alone because of your hand" (Jeremiah 15:17). Indeed he was "a man of like passions" as was Elijah (James 5:17; I Kings 19:1-4,10), nevertheless he loved the Lord more than all else (Jeremiah 20:9)! Yes, sorrow overwhelmed the great servant of the Lord (Jeremiah 20:14-18; Lamentations 1:12) due to the multitudes of the sins of the people.

Should we not sorrow as did God and Jeremiah during the pre-captive years? Should we not blush at the multitudes of abominations committed over and again amongst God's elect? Indeed! Our hearts ought to be grieved as was the Lord's. For, "our iniquities testify against us" (Jeremiah 14:7); and in many places today "truth has perished" from people's mouths (Jeremiah 7:28). Although the Lord has been good to us there does seem to be "a famine in the land" (Amos 8:11). Yes, we have "rejected the word of the Lord" and robbed ourselves of wisdom (Jeremiah 8:9), therefore "we are not saved!" (Jeremiah 8:20)

History is repeating itself: "Everyone is dull-hearted, without knowledge" (Jeremiah 10:14); and thus we should sorrow-for this is a great sin (Hosea 4:6)! Let us cry out to the Lord, "Do not leave us!" (Jeremiah 14:9). Yes, "Let us search out and examine our ways, and turn back to the Lord; let us lift our hearts and hands to God in Heaven..." (Lamentations 3:40-41), lest we be consumed (Jeremiah 8:13a)!

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness" (Acts 26:25).*

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SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

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CAN ONE BE ACTIVATED TO
FULL SERVICE?
SHOULD I DROP IN A QUARTER?
THE CHRISTIAN'S PURSUIT OF
PURITY

HOW SOON AFTER REPENTANCE CAN ONE BE ACTIVATED TO FULL SERVICE?

Jack Wilhelm

The Bible has much to say about forgiveness, for which we can be thankful. God is a merciful God of the second chance. Christians are taught to imitate His compassion. It is important for those who forgive and those who are forgiven to comply with God's teaching. In the past, we may have heard more teaching about the duties of forgivers than we have heard about the duties of the forgiven.

Fruits Worthy of Repentance

John the Baptist told some to "bear fruits worthy of repentance" (Matthew 3:8). He apparently felt that there should be some visible continuing verification in their behavior of the penitence they professed. In effect, he said, "If you mean it when you say you have repented, show us."

Jesus and Matthew 21:28-31

Jesus told a story in Matthew 21:28-31 which shows that observable compliance to a commitment is preferred to mere lip service. He told of two sons, both of whom were asked by their father to work in his vineyard. One said he would do so, but did not honor the intention he confessed. The other said he would not but later changed his mind and went. It is clear that Jesus is disappointed in the behavior of a person who pledges future obedience but does not show proof of it in his subsequent actions.

The Case of the Corinthians

The case of public sin in 1 Corinthians 5 that Paul rebuked and the subsequent developments provide a clear example also of what we are studying. Paul commanded the church to discipline one who was openly sinning. The church appeared to be condoning the sinner's involvement, shown by the "glorying" about it that Paul condemned (1 Corinthians 5:6-11).

It is a recognized principle in the Bible that sin can be so public in the lives of some that they must be "rebuke[d] in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear" (1 Timothy 5:20). It must be admitted

also that it is possible for the church to be offended by the behavior of people (1 Corinthians 10:32).

Even as Paul taught them firmly to discipline, he also taught them plainly that they needed to forgive the sinner when he repented. Read carefully 2 Corinthians 2:3-8, especially verse 7: "...you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one is swallowed up with too much sorrow."

Implications for the Sinner

Is there not more implied here, however, than merely the reaction and responsibility of the church? After all, the sinner had sinned and the ball was in his court to repent. Sometimes the sinner wants the church to be the heavy. He can exploit the situation by swaying public opinion. A church merely trying to do its duty is portrayed as being heartless and self-righteous, easing the need for any proof of penitence. Notice that Paul refers to the "much sorrow" that man apparently had shown (v. 7). That person's "sorrow" was so obvious that Paul wanted them to be cautious that they not go for overkill. In that case, the sinner was not trying to get by with token sorrow.

Further, he saw evidence of "earnest desire, your mourning, and zeal" (2 Corinthians 7:7) and evidence of much godly sorrow that had caused genuine repentance (2 Corinthians 7:7-9). Later, in verse 11, he affirmed that they had "sorrowed in a godly manner." He was impressed with the "diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter."

It was obvious that the penitence was not pretended. The Corinthians did not resist facing the issue or attempt to rationalize the guilt. They cleared the air and showed every indication that all doubt had been removed about the genuineness of the penitence and their response to it. The anxiety

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FROM THE EDITORS

Chuck Webster

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SHOULD I DROP IN A QUARTER?

This time of year you see them everywhere. They stand outside Wal-Mart, malls, and nearly every department store in town with their bells in hand asking for your loose change. Should we give it to them? After all, aren't they simply part of a benevolent organization involved in helping the poor and homeless? Perhaps you might be surprised to find out a few things about The Salvation Army.

This movement was begun by William Booth, a man who left the Methodist ministry to preach as an independent evangelist in the slums of London. Because many of his converts did not feel "at home" in churches, Booth set up Christian Mission Centers. He arranged his organization after the pattern of an army, with members being called "soldiers," "ministers," "officers," and Booth himself, "General." This "army" met in tents, theaters, dance halls and the outdoors. Despite being persecuted by established religions, Booth and his followers attacked social ills--hunger, homelessness, and poverty. Late in the 1800s the Army began to spread rapidly around the world--to the United States, India, Australia, South America, Pakistan and many European countries. Since its inception until today the movement has grown and is now present in over 85 countries, operating group homes for retarded people, drop-in centers for runaways and drug addicts, and programs to combat child abuse. In the U.S. alone the Army has 10,000 centers, 5,000 officers and 24,000 employees (from *What Is The Salvation Army?*). There is no question but that The Salvation Army does much good in helping the poor and disabled, even here in this area. This might lead some to ask, "Then shouldn't we support them?"

As Christians we are certainly privileged to have the opportunity to be involved in much benevolent work (James 1:27; Matthew 25:34-46; Galatians 6:9,10). But that doesn't mean that we are to support every organization that does good, regardless of what other things that group may be doing. We must look past the external matters at the objectives and beliefs of any group we might support.

Notice carefully what the Army's purposes are, according to its own booklet, *What is The Salvation Army?*: "The Salvation Army is motivated by a love for God and a concern for the needs of all humanity. This movement is expressed in the work of The Salvation Army--truly a spiritual ministry. Its purposes are to: **Preach** the Gospel; **Spread** Christian truths; **Provide** basic human necessities, such as food, clothing and shelter; and **Work** to promote spiritual, moral and physical well-being" (p. 3). Notice that the benevolent aspect is only one of their four basic objectives. The Army labels itself an "international religious and charitable movement," claiming to be a "branch of the Christian church..." (p. 2). Clearly, the Salvation Army

is simply another of the thousands of denominations that have been started by men since the first century.

Page 8 of their booklet lists the doctrines of The Salvation Army. We would agree with several of these, such as: the Bible is inspired; there is one God, who exists in three Persons; Jesus is God; Jesus made an atonement available to the whole world; continuance in salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ; and the soul is immortal. But they depart from the Bible on other matters.

Their view toward how to be saved is typical of most denominations. With reference to salvation, they state: "That repentance toward God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and regeneration by the Holy Spirit are necessary to salvation" (p. 13). (Now remember, this is part of the "Gospel" they are trying to preach and the "Christian truths" they are attempting to spread). Where in their statement of doctrines is the Bible's teaching on the baptism through which Christ's blood washes away one's sins and adds him/her to the Lord's church (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26-27)? It is nowhere to be found. In fact, in their official creed book, *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*, it is asserted that baptism is not necessary "in order to receive salvation" (p. 185), which clearly contradicts 1 Peter 3:21: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us..." If baptism isn't necessary to salvation, then one can be saved outside of Christ, for baptism puts one "into Christ" (Galatians 3:27). How can one be saved outside of the One who died to save him? Their teaching on salvation obviously contradicts the plain teaching of the Bible.

In addition, although Jesus specifically commands His followers to remember His death through observing the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:24), The Salvation Army does not keep this commandment. The reason they exclude it is to testify to themselves and others "against the danger of trusting to any external rite as though it has virtue in itself" (Handbook, p. 188). Is that sufficient grounds for disregarding an explicit command of Jesus?

Other Salvation Army false teachings include sin, the illumination of the Holy Spirit, mechanical instruments of music in worship, women preachers, and public fund-raising efforts (W. Jackson). These should be sufficient to impress upon our minds the fact that The Salvation Army is more than just a benevolent organization. It is a denomination which exists outside the bounds of God's authority and teaches things contradictory to His will. The Salvation Army does much benevolent good--perhaps the Lord's church should think more about meeting the physical needs of those around us. But let us make sure we do it in a way that will give God the glory through the church which His Son built (Matthew 5:16; Ephesians 3:21).

which Paul felt as he had awaited getting word about what they did shows that there was an expectation on his part that changed behavior should be obviously demonstrated.

The Case of John Mark

When John Mark defected (Acts 13:5,13), Paul apparently felt that some time was needed for Mark to regain a stature that justified using him as a public servant and traveling companion again (Acts 15:37-39). We do not have to prove that Mark was in jeopardy about his soul at that time to see that Paul thought Mark needed more time to regain Paul's confidence. It is true that Barnabas had confidence in Mark again quicker than Paul did (Acts 15:37-39). Kinfolks usually are more charitable, but they may also be less objective. Paul still wanted to wait a while longer about using Mark, but with the passing of more time, he did give a public endorsement of Mark (2 Timothy 4:11).

In some local situations, it may well be wise for brethren who have sinned publicly and repented publicly still not to push quickly for ministry in a public format until enough time has passed for the congregation in general to regain confidence. One who has offended the church and is genuine about repentance should be able to understand that even more keenly than those who have been offended. I know that the Lord used Peter on Pentecost less than two months after his public denial, but He also had been with Peter under circumstances that reaffirmed what He felt He could expect from him (John 21). Peter was also the possessor of divine aid and guidance that we don't have.

Deacons Also to be Tested

The concept of readiness, acceptance, and approval for public ministry is taught concerning deacons who should "first be tested" and "blameless" (1 Timothy 3:10). It's not a matter of their salvation being questioned or their being "second class" Christians. It's a matter of gaining acceptance so the congregation can have confidence in them, acquired by the passing of time and observation of their past records of service.

Extreme Actions Generate Trouble

You will notice that it's the extreme actions that usually get us in trouble. For example: sometimes people in sin stubbornly refuse to repent, or if they repent, self-righteous people stubbornly refuse to forgive them. In between, there are those situations where some in both of those camps try to do the right thing. But human nature is such that not everyone can turn his or her feelings on and off quickly. So eyebrows are raised if the "penitent" are thrust too quickly into the forefront of public ministry. Even if it's technically the "right" thing to do to be magnanimous and to cheer for the underdog, acting as if nothing ever happened, isn't there some Biblical precedent in these cases that justifies our taking some time to let a fuller measure of con-

fidence and trust be gained? How long? I don't know. Some people seem to be genuinely convincing more quickly than others. Even though all sins must be forgiven, some evidently are more public than others. John said there were sins "unto death" and "not unto death" (1 John 5:16) which, taking the full context of 1 John into consideration, seemed to relate to whether the sins were stubbornly denied and defended or whether they were freely confessed. There are times when one responds requesting prayer about personal thoughts and feelings of inadequacy and there are times when people have been involved in sins that attracted widespread news coverage. So I'm reluctant to set a time frame when an entire congregation may be readily and quickly convinced of very sincere action that involves matters that have not been public in the first place. The Bible seems to recognize human differences. Paul said, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18). So different humans have different response times as to what is possible and what depends on them. But if a large segment of a congregation is upset about hasty acceptance in cases of very public sin and offense to the church, what can it hurt to ease a situation by slowing things down a bit? Some have thought that 1 Timothy 5:22 ("do not lay hands on anyone hastily") was a word of caution that no one be appointed too quickly to a sacred ministry for which they were not ready.

The Nature of the Church

The nature of the church and statements about it seem to imply that caution can be wise, however, in those noteworthy cases where the entire church is seriously affected at least. After all, "in fact the body is not one member but many" (1 Corinthians 12:14). Paul warned further that "there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another" (1 Corinthians 12:25).

Simply put, that may be saying, if members stumble, then love, rebuke, and reclaim them. If they repent, forgive them, but also work with them so that they can in the future be as fruitful and useful as ministering servants as possible. In the meantime, the ones who are repenting need to "have the same care" for the church as they want to receive. They need to recognize that a time of growth and rehabilitation may be wise. That will let human nature work in the minds of all at the same time so that no division (schism) would occur in the church, as might happen if there were a push for a level of public visibility that was premature.

Those who are forgiven and appreciate it most should be among the first to understand that process--and insist that it be followed (cf. Luke 7:41-47).

THE CHRISTIAN'S PURSUIT OF PURITY

Mike Winkler

As Christians, we must forever strive to keep ourselves pure or "unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). The word "pure" in the Bible conveys the idea of being free from contamination or being cleansed (2 Timothy 2:22; Psalm 119:9).

QUESTION: Practically speaking, what areas of my life need to be/must be pure?

ANSWER: -My teachings -- Titus 2:7

-My heart -- Psalm 24:4;
Matthew 5:8; James 4:8

-My everyday life -- Proverbs 21:8

-My motives -- Philippians 1:17 +
Proverbs 16:2

-My thoughts -- Philippians 4:8

QUESTION: Knowing the importance of living pure, how can I achieve and maintain a pure life?

ANSWER: -Obey God's word -- Psalm 119:9 +11

-Practice, on a daily basis, true
Christianity --James 1:27;
Romans 12:2

When we, as Christians, strive to live a pure life -- one not contaminated by the world -- we can and will enjoy a happy life, filled with heavenly blessings. For example, we will enjoy:

...A closer relationship with God -- James 4:8

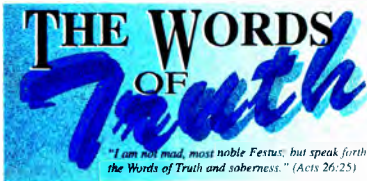
...The goodness of God -- Psalm 73:1

...Eternity with God -- Matthew 5:8 + Psalm 24:3-4

QUESTION: ARE YOU LIVING A PURE LIFE? OR IS YOUR LIFE BEING CONTAMINATED BY THE WORLD?

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THE WORDS OF *Truth*

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A POWERFUL EMOTION

Johnny Ramsey

A great hymn tells us:

- the love that drew salvation's plan!
- the grace that brought it down to man!
- the mighty gulf that God did span
At Calvary.

Where would we be were it not for matchless grace and infinite love from heaven? It should not be difficult to return such unselfish service to our Creator and share it abundantly with our brethren as well as the world about us. The exquisite realization that such mercy has been poured out upon us should cause us to stand in awe and amazement and, thus, engender in our hearts a noble resolve to pass these attributes and concerns on to others!

Christians are taught to manifest kindness even toward those who spitefully use us, persecute us and seek to destroy us (Matthew 5:44; Romans 12:17ff.). Therefore, it ought to be relatively easy to demonstrate compassionate concern for those "Of like precious faith" (2 Peter 1:1) and to brethren who stand in need of assistance (Galatians 6:10).

Lord, help me live from day to day
In such a self-forgetful way
That even when I kneel to pray,
My prayer may be for others...

In 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 and 16:14 we read verses that clearly evidence the essence of brotherly love. When all that we do is done in love we desire to believe the best about our brethren. We do not jump to hasty conclusions so that we can berate, expose and rejoice in the fall of a brother. It breaks our heart when a fellow-Christian falls. We strive to restore him lovingly (Galatians 6:1-2). We will tenderly consider his plight and then provoke him to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24). We will expend every proper effort to restore him and save a soul from death so that a multitude of sins can be covered (James 5:19-20). This is

the way of brotherly love (1 Peter 4:8) as we recall how deep in sin we were when the Savior sought to seek and save our lost soul (Luke 19:10). We are motivated by the masterful and unfathomed grace of God Almighty (Romans 11:33-36).

I was sinking deep in sin,
Far from the peaceful shore,
Very deeply stained within
Sinking to rise no more...

Down deep in many human hearts is a longing for redemption, cleansing and hope. Are we not the ones, commissioned by Jesus, to take the message of salvation to these hungry souls? Also, in the five billion folk who inhabit our earth, can be found thousands of brethren who have left Christianity to wander back into the sink-holes of iniquity (2 Peter 2:20-22). Do we not love them enough to try to go to them and try to bring them back?

To the apostle Paul nothing compelled him more than the love of Christ--the One who died for all (Hebrews 2:9). Such magnificent splendor caused Paul to incessantly seek for those who were lost in sin. It also caused him to deeply care for brethren who did not return his interest. A very sad statement in 2 Corinthians 12:15 reminds us of his heartache: "The more I love you, the less I be loved."

There are many gospel songs that get our attention in regard to the richness of this emotion of Biblical dimension:

Bless be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love...
When we asunder part
It gives us inward pain;
But we shall still be joined in heart,
And hope to meet again.

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FROM THE EDITORS

Levi Sides

*Sixth Avenue Church of Christ
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THE INCOMPARABLE CHRIST

Jesus Christ came from the bosom of the Father to the bosom of a woman. He became the Son of Man that we might become sons of God. He put on humanity that we might put on divinity. He left the region where the rivers never freeze, winds never blow, frost never bites, flowers never fade; where there are no deaths, no sickness, no sorrows, and no sins.

Jesus Christ was conceived contrary to the laws of nature, was born in poverty, and was reared in obscurity; and yet He lived to enrich mankind for all time. A stable had been His birthplace, and a manger His cradle. Only once did He ever cross the boundaries of His small country. For twenty years He worked as a carpenter in a despised village. He began His ministry at the River Jordan, with no organization to support Him, and no patrons to enrich Him. As far as we know, he never possessed the value of one dollar. Remember His words: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head" (Matthew 8:20).

He was an itinerant preacher. When invited He entered men's homes for dinner. When unasked He went hungry. He ate grain from His hands as He walked through the fields. His support was little and His treasurer, Judas Iscariot, stole part of the little He had. He slept often under the open sky, in the wilderness without cover, in the city without a home, and in the hills without a bed.

He healed the multitudes without medicine, and made no charge for His services. He never wrote a book; and yet, all the libraries of the world could not contain all the books that have been written about Him. He never wrote a song, and yet He has provided the themes for more songs than anyone else. He never established an university; yet all the schools on earth have not had the students

that have sat at His feet. He never marshaled an army, never drafted a soldier, or fired a weapon; yet no leader has ever had the volunteers who, under His orders, made rebels stack arms and surrender to his command, never firing a shot.

He was betrayed for thirty pieces of silver by a friend. With perfect knowledge and full understanding of all that was involved, Jesus courageously accepted the cross and bravely marched toward it. He chose to die! He did not hide or flee when they came to take Him. He even helped His enemies in their arrest of Him.

It is difficult to understand just what a horrible experience death is on a cross. The wounds made by the nails which are driven through nerves and tendons, and grievously aggravated by the weight of the body must within itself be almost unbearable. Consider also the position of the body which makes every movement a pain, and hinders greatly the circulation.

On the cross, Jesus gave to John His mother, to the apostles peace of mind and soul, to the thief His pardon, and to the World His life! Three days later, Jesus came forward from His borrowed tomb giving hope to all men.

His life on this earth covered only thirty-three years--but the story of this life has been translated into every language and is acknowledged as the world's best seller. If people would only follow His teachings, injustice, poverty, sin, and fear would be banished and war would be no more. Great men have come and gone; He lives on. Herod could not kill Him, Satan could not seduce Him, Death could not destroy Him, and the grave could not hold Him. He is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the one and only hope of the world!

A POWERFUL EMOTION , *Continued from Page 1*

Sometimes when we are together so much and so regularly are surrounded by fellow-Christians we tend to take one another for granted. But, when business, travel or illness, takes us away for a season we begin to yearn to be surrounded by the people of God and we realize how empty the world is and how precious the spiritual body of Christ!

Love is the golden chain
That binds our happy hearts above
And he is an heir of heaven
Whose bosom glows with love!

Too many times, however, it is a mere profession of care and concern--and not the genuine article--that is substituted for love divine in our hearts and lives. I am reminded of the amusing love-note a young man wrote to his sweetheart:

My dearest darling:
I would walk through a brick wall, run
through flaming fire or swim the deepest
ocean to be by your side, hold your hand
and look into your beautiful eyes. And, I'll
be over Saturday night if it doesn't rain.

When the slightest obstacle or imagined insult causes us to hate our brother or ignore his needs, our

love is not deep, helpful or rich. We must mature enough to press through indifference and neglect to the warm glow of unselfishness that will produce the mind of Christ that evidences itself in the active pursuit of the needs of others (Philippians 2:1-5). It is not easy but that is the challenge of brotherly love.

Paul loved Peter enough to correct him when he was wrong. This was done openly because the hypocrisy of the impetuous Simon was hurting the cause of Christ (Galatians 2:11-14). Years later Peter refers to Paul as "our beloved brother." That statement in 2 Peter 3 forever proves that love in action means we correct, chasten and discipline because we love. In Revelation 3:19 our Lord said: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous, therefore, and repent."

In 1 John 3:1-3 we rejoice to learn that the incomparable love of God reaches so far as to encompass us and make it possible for human beings to become children of the heavenly Father. This gives us hope and joy as well as peace and purpose. He is the epitome of love (1 John 4:8) and clearly demonstrated this in the sending of our Savior, Redeemer and Friend (1 John 4:14). We thus can be rooted and grounded in love (Ephesians 3:17-18) and come to realize that nothing can ever separate us from "the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord" (Romans 8:39).

RESPONDING TO OTHERS

Mike Winkler

Jesus said, "Just as you want people to treat you, treat them in the same way" (Luke 6:31). The question is, "How do we want people to treat us or respond to us on a daily basis?" Jesus, in his Sermon on the Mount recorded in Luke 6, suggested the following:

RESPONSE #1 - LOVE - v 27, 35. The word "love" (*agapao*) describes an action of one's will rather than a response of one's emotions. Too, it suggests that one's desire for others is always for their well-being (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:4-8). This attitude is illustrated beautifully by the "Good Samaritan" who chose to help one who viewed him as inferior (Luke 10:25-37).

RESPONSE #2 - DO GOOD - v 27, 35. The phrase "do good" conveys something that is noble or right. Too, it suggests that the action is feasible (cf. Matthew 5:14-16). Paul repeatedly encouraged his readers to busy themselves doing good to others (Galatians 6:9-10; Titus 2:7,14; 3:8,14; 1 Timothy 6:18). Again, the "Good Samaritan"

exemplifies this attitude by caring for the "victim's" physical needs (Luke 10:25-37).

RESPONSE #3 - BLESS OTHERS - v 28. The word "bless" means to speak well of another. Alex Haley, noted author of the book *Roots*, lived by the motto, "Find the good, and praise it." Paul instructed the Romans, "Bless those who persecute you" (Romans 12:14). Peter encourages us not to return, "insult for insult, but give a blessing instead" (1 Peter 3:8-9).

RESPONSE #4 - PRAY FOR OTHERS - v 28. Inspiration defines prayer simply as the desires of a person's heart (Romans 10:1; cf. 1 Samuel 1:13-17). This attitude was exemplified by Jesus, while dying on the cross (Luke 23:34) and emulated by Stephen when he was stoned (Acts 7:60).

When one chooses to respond to others as Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, he chooses to act like God, the Father (v 35; Matthew 5:45)--He chooses right!

THE CHURCH IS NOT A VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION

David E. Parks

In the course of my studies, I sometimes encounter articles by management experts advising church leaders on the efficient recruitment, motivation and utilization of volunteers. At the risk of sounding picky or authoritarian, may I say that the Church is **NOT** a volunteer organization. Elders, Deacons, and other Christians make a serious mistake when they fall for the modern, democratic idea of the church as a volunteer organization.

Where did this idea of the church as a volunteer organization originate? Certainly not the Bible! God's chosen leaders were never called volunteers in the Word. Imagine James writing, "*James, a **volunteer** of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ*" (James 1:1). Could you picture Paul writing, "*Paul, a **volunteer** of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God*" (Romans 1:1)?

The members of the church were never addressed as volunteers either. Paul did not write, "*To the **volunteers** in Christ who are in Colossae*" (Colossians 1:2).

It is true that we enter the kingdom of God of our own free will. From that perspective we are volunteers. However, once we become Christians, we are not members of a volunteer organization. We are members of the "*family of God*," the "*Body of Christ*," and the "*Kingdom of the Son*" (1 Peter 4:16; 1 Corinthians 12:26; Colossians 1:13).

This differentiation--between volunteers and ser-

vants of God--is important because volunteers and their leaders frankly do not expect very much of each other. Leadership experts tell us that the leaders of volunteer organizations tend to expect a very low level of performance and quality from the volunteers because they are: hard to get, working for free, and can quit on a whim. If a volunteer fails to perform as promised, what can his supervisor do--dock his pay, or give him time off?

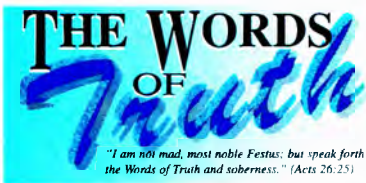
The Lord does not give us the option of treating ourselves as volunteers. The words "*servant*" and "*serve*" are used over 130 times in the New Testament. The word "**volunteer**" is not found in the Bible. We are not called to volunteer. We are called to serve (Galatians 5:13). Following are several points from the Bible concerning how we are to serve:

1. According to the ability God has given us (Matthew 25:15-23; Luke 19:13-25; 1 Peter 4:10).
2. According to the opportunities presented to us (Galatians 6:10; Philippians 4:10).
3. With all our hearts (Colossians 3:23; 1 Samuel 12:24).

From these passages we conclude that each Christian should pray for wisdom to determine what abilities God has granted him or her and use them diligently as God presents opportunities to do so. It does not matter what your circumstance in life is. God has called you to serve.

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THE WORDS OF Truth

*"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth
the Words of Truth and soberness" (Acts 26:25).*

Vol. 35 No. 50

December 31, 1998

SEE ARTICLES INSIDE:

PROPER ORDER
THE GLORY OF PREACHING-
Part 1
NOTHING BUT NOISE

PROPER ORDER

Johnny Ramsey

Just where the well-known proverb "putting the cart before the horse" originated is unknown to me. However, we see illustrations of the incongruous conduct it bespeaks on every hand. Even in the realm of spiritual matters, we find myriad absurdities that parallel the foolish vision of seeing a horse following the very cart he should be pulling.

Did you ever go to a baseball game and see a shortstop try to throw the ball to first base before he had really caught it, or a football player attempt to run with a pass from the quarterback before he had securely caught the ball? No wonder someone said, "The hurrier I go, the behinder I get!" When one puts the cart before the horse, trouble ensues. This principle is especially true in the realm of divine incidents.

Divine of Theoretical Beginning?

As regards the creation of the world, the evolutionary theory has "the cart before the horse." Believers in this godless, senseless notion portray a lack of intelligent reasoning by saying that matter existed before mind. That is, the world came into being by chance, not by creation. They teach that life evolved from a tiny cell that flipped out of water onto dry ground. Of course, they never tell us where the cell, the water and the dry ground came from! To believe that matter antedated mind is incompatible with the attitudes of even those who espouse such a theory.

Let us illustrate. Suppose you went to Cape Canaveral to visit the missile base. As you view the latest marvel of scientific genius--one of the soaring rockets--two scientists walk up to your side. What would their reaction be if you were to say: "Men this is indeed a marvelous mechanism! Which one of you did it create first?" For such a question, you would probably get a free strait jacket and a nice ride in a paddy wagon to some quite rest home. Nonetheless, the question is in harmony with the idea of matter before mind, which the atheists have avowed for years. Not until you can believe that the hydrogen bomb created Werner Von Braun can you dare accept the claim that the world just happened, and that man evolved from

the existing material.

Still the most intelligent answer to the riddle of the origin of the universe, even from an academic view, is the first verse in the Bible: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). Any other idea puts "The cart before the horse"!

The Matter of Salvation

In matters pertaining to salvation, we see several perverted teachings that completely reverse the true order of things. For instance, in the religious world we see many theologians who teach that salvation precedes baptism. The one who does the saving, Jesus Christ, made just exactly the opposite statement in Mark 16:16, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." That settles the matter--unless you prefer to put "the cart before the horse."

These same people look for blessings before obedience and for rejoicing prior to conversion, but notice the following passages which inform us of the proper time to rejoice:

And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:39).

And he [the jailer] took them the some hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house (Acts 16:33-34).

The Pentecostals make a play on the work of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 5:32 and 2:38, we learn that only those who obey Christ by being baptized for the remission of sins have the Holy Spirit given unto them. These people often strongly reject the necessity of

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FROM THE EDITORS

Chuck Webster

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THE GLORY OF PREACHING-Part 1

It is not difficult to observe that the perception of preaching has declined in our country during the last few decades. The term itself carries negative connotations, as seen in the oft-repeated conversational expressions, "Don't *preach* to me!" and "Try not to sound too *preachy*." The perception suggested in our language, though, finds a more concrete expression in the role of preaching in some church services. Many congregations have relegated preaching to a less prominent position in worship, replacing it with more "interesting" presentations such as dramas, testimonies, and solos. In others the change is more subtle, perhaps seen only in the decrease of time a preacher is allowed, while more time is devoted to scripture reading or singing. We must remember that there is nothing wrong with emphasizing other acts of worship; preaching is certainly no more important than breaking bread or singing. It is biblical to emphasize the public reading of scripture (1 Timothy 4:13). A renewed emphasis on eating the bread and drinking the cup in a worthy manner would strengthen us all (1 Corinthians 11:18-34). Spending more time pouring out our hearts in praise to God and teaching and admonishing one another through song would no doubt bring us closer to God and to each other (Ephesians 5:18-20). We would benefit if we devoted more time to prayer and to the collection (1 Timothy 2:8; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2). But we must make certain that we do not de-emphasize one biblically prescribed item of worship and replace it with another. Downplaying the importance of preaching at the behest of our entertainment-crazed culture would malign preaching's prominent position in God's scheme of redemption.

Preaching in the Old Testament

Preaching has always been important to God. The prophets of the Old Testament were essentially preachers. They were God's spokesmen--men who proclaimed God's truth to His people as well as to the heathen. In times of great spiritual and moral decay, God raised up prophets in whose mouth He put His word and whom He sent to the people in an effort to turn them back to truth (Hailey, *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, p. 12). Peter called Noah a "preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5). Abraham is recognized in scripture as a

prophet (Genesis 20:7,17). The great lawgiver Moses was a prophet (Deut. 18:15-18; 34:10; et al.). Samuel served as both judge and prophet (Acts 3:24). Other oral prophets whom God used were Nathan (2 Samuel 12:1ff.), Gad (2 Samuel 24:11ff.), Ahijah (1 Kings 11:29ff.), and many more. We are most familiar, though, with the literary prophets whom God used to proclaim His message to people who needed to change their lives. They later put their messages in written form to be preserved for subsequent generations and now consist of the last seventeen Old Testament books. The point is this: preaching is not a recent, man-made development; since very early in God's redemptive scheme preaching has played an important role. Though a part of Old Testament preaching was fore-telling, the majority was forth-telling. These men were heralding messages about God's love, mercy, and perhaps especially, His judgment.

The Name "Preacher"

The New Testament title for preachers (*kerux*; see 1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11; 2 Peter 2:5) is one of honor; it is used only three times in the New Testament and refers to "a herald or messenger vested with public authority, who conveyed the official messages of kings, magistrates, princes, military commanders, or who gave a public summons or demand, and performed various other duties: (*Strong's*). According to Zodhiates, a *kerux* in classical Greek was "a public servant of supreme power both in peace and in war, one who summoned the...town gathering. [He] was the public crier and reader of state messages such as the conveyor of a declaration of war" (*The Complete Word Study Dictionary*, p. 861). Friedrich says that the *kerux* "has a high place in Greek antiquity; he belongs to the court, carries a scepter, and is renowned for cleverness and wisdom" (*Abridged TDNT*, p. 430). Though God's emphasis throughout the Bible is on the preaching, not the preacher, it is clear by His choice of designations that He considered preachers to be a significant element in His redemptive plan.

In the next article on this subject, we will examine how God used preaching in the New Testament to accomplish His will.

baptism--yet claim the possession of the Holy Spirit! Again we see "the cart before the horse" operating in religious circles.

A majority of Protestant groups teach and practice infant baptism because of their belief in original sin. Therefore, they have infant membership in their churches. It is easy to see they borrowed these doctrines from Catholicism. Notice the perversion of the truth: such doctrines have sin existing before transgression. This violates: "Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). And "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that you were created, till iniquity was found in you" (Ezekiel 28:15), as well as claiming the possibility of participation in Christianity before knowledge of the Lord occurs. The latter doctrine openly conflicts with Hebrews 8:6-13 which tells us that those in a covenant relationship in the gospel age shall "know the Lord." An eight-day old infant cannot qualify.

The Problem in the Church

In the church today we often put "the cart before the horse." In our teaching programs some brethren operate on the principle that we ought to "give a man a Bible class so he will become a teacher." This is deadly! Another "cart before the horse" argument is this: "Let's go ahead and appoint them as elders and maybe they will qualify themselves later." One of the most dangerous problems along this line comes from

the young Christian who says: "I'll marry this non-Christian and later convert him/her to the Lord." Half of the time that cart never sees the horse! In other words, the proper situation--a home as God would have it--never comes close to happening.

In Matthew 6:21 and John 7:17 we find two passages usually turned around by all of us. We preach that we must teach a man to love the Lord before he will give liberally. Jesus said, "where your treasure is there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:21). I have known of people to be reached with the gospel through their pocket-book. Teach a man to give generously and he will not soon despise that to which he gives.

We teach that a man must know all the intricate teachings of Christianity before he can do them. Jesus informed us that if a man willeth to do God's will, he shall know the teaching, whether it be of God (John 7:17). Show me a man with a proper frame of mind toward things divine and I will show you a devoted Christian in a short time (see Acts 8, 9, 10 for examples of the Ethiopian, Saul of Tarsus and Cornelius).

Conclusion

These few thoughts should just get us started on a fascinating study that can help us to avoid ever putting "the cart before the horse" in those matters of eternal consequence.

NOTHING BUT NOISE

Allen Webster

John Gipson relates the following account:

It was a bad day for Humphrey Marshall and his Confederate soldiers. They had painfully hauled their artillery over the mountains from Virginia into Kentucky. At Sandy Valley they confronted James Garfield and the Union forces. On a peak ominously named Grave Yard Point, Garfield ordered two Kentucky infantry companies under Captain Frederick A. Williams across the valley to dislodge Marshall and his rebels.

Allan Peskin describes the action: "Holding cartridge boxes and rifles above their heads, they waded in an icy, waist-deep creek, and dashed towards the opposite ridge. This was the opportunity for which Marshall's artillery captain had been waiting. For a month he had nursed his precious guns, hauling them over the mountains, tugging them through mud, and delaying the advance of the entire brigade. Now, all of his work could be justified. He zeroed in on the charging federals, waiting until they reached point-blank range before pulling the lanyard. With a high-pitched scream a twelve pound shell lobbed high in the air, headed unerringly for William's advance guard-and plopped harmlessly into the mud. Marshall's shells were all duds, and although his cannon boomed noisily away throughout the rest of the afternoon, they inflicted no damage other than splattering a few federals with mud." I can well imagine the disgust the

artillery captain must have felt. He had nothing but noise.

"Nothing but noise"--reminds us of some new testament passages:

(1) *"Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal" (1 Corinthians 13:1).*

Christians might be generous with words and works (13:2,3), but acting from selfishness or name-seeking can profit nothing. Only works constrained by love for God count to God (2 Corinthians 2:14). "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20). *Singing* "O How I Love Jesus" does not necessarily equal *living* "O How I Love Jesus."

The Christian life without love--nothing but noise.

(2) *"But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:17, 18).*

NOTHING BUT NOISE, *continued from Page 3*

It is easy to talk about spreading the Word, helping the needy, and supporting good works, but when it comes down to doing it, we must be ready with sweatdrops on the brow, teardrops on the cheek, time on the hands, and wallets in pockets. Rubber must meet road. The Pharisees could talk a good game, but that was about it (Matthew 23:2, 3). Schoolyard basketball players say, "Put up or shut up." Christians "put up" without needing to "speak up" (Matthew 6:1-5).

The Christian life without action--nothing but noise!

(3) *"If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (James 2:15-17).*

Christians rightly condemn the denominational doctrine "salvation by faith only," but sometimes wrongly practice it. It takes more than saying "be ye warmed and filled," to a lonely widow or a hungry orphan. They need more than, "I believe God will bless you." We, as God's people, must be God's instruments. Faith is more than assent, it is action. It is a verb of readiness, not rhetoric. It does not say, "Sounds good, take care of that," but, "Great idea, I will do it."

The Christian life without faith--nothing but noise!

(4) *"These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage" (Jude 16).*

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This describes too much preaching heard from our pulpits, great swelling words which gain admiration, but not genuine additions. If one speaks without Scripture, really, he is a noise-maker, not a preacher (cf. 2 Timothy 4:2). Paul's accusers thought he was "full of hot air." "For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible" (2 Corinthians 10:10). But Paul showed the power of God's Word contrasted with the emptiness of his enemies: "Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present (10:11).

False teachers and religious entertainers--nothing but noise!

(5) *"What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also" (1 Corinthians 14:15).*

The scribes were known for long prayers, which reached no further than the rafters (Mark 12:38). God gets sick of thoughtless, heart-less (Matthew 15:9), ritualistic, vain worship (Isaiah 1:12). What might be beautiful to man's ears, might be blasphemy to God's. What teenagers listen to often is not music to parents--only noise. Would not it be a shame to offer something to God which He thought was noise?

Worship without sincerity--nothing but noise!

God wants more than noisy nuisances! Let us be careful to never offer out-of-tune lives, out-of-harmony voices, off-pitch attitudes, or out-of-time service. We can do better for He deserves better.